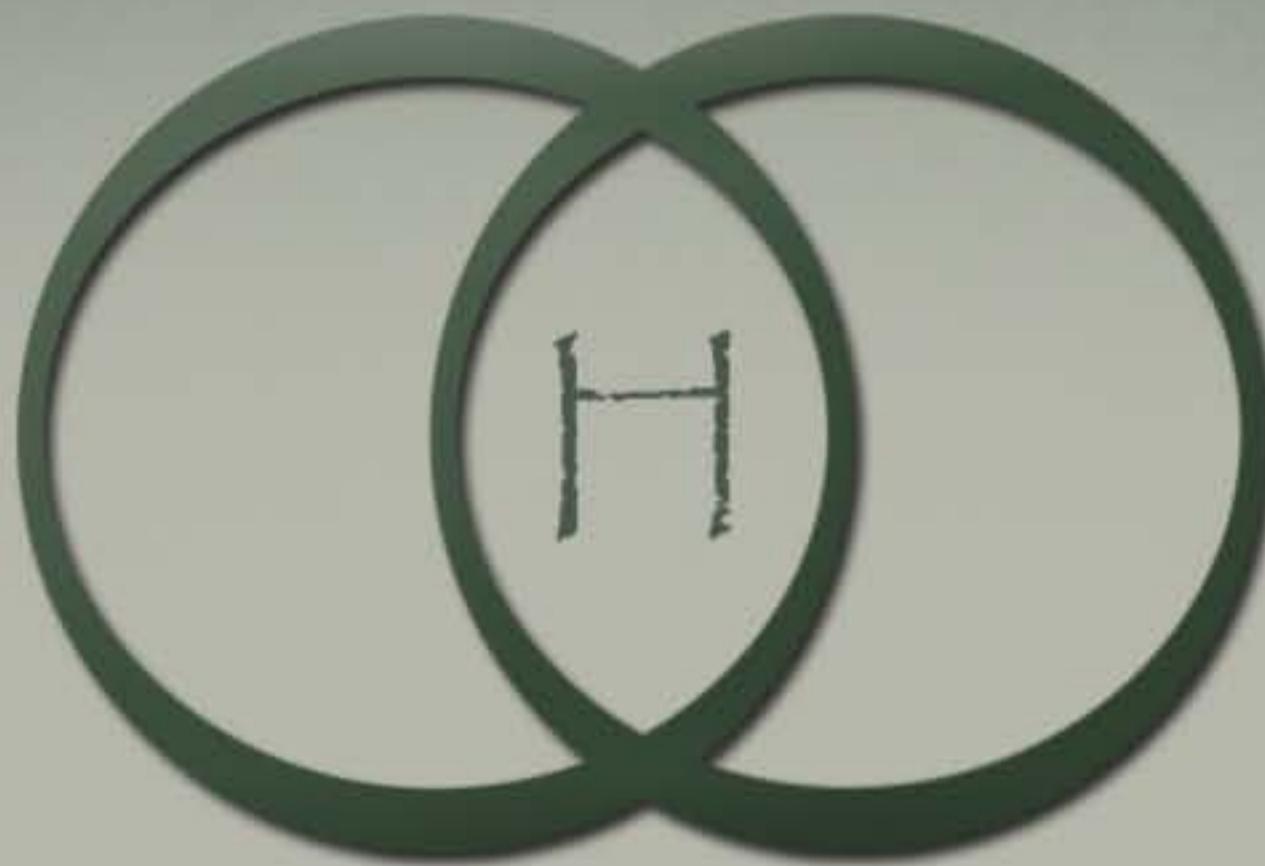


CRACKS IN THE FOUNDATION

LEADERSHIP SCHISMS IN
AL-QA'IDA 1989-2006



HARMONY PROJECT
COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER
A T W E S T P O I N T

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HARMONY PROJECT

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Foreword

Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world—and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.¹

President Bush, September 20, 2001

The near-term goals of al-Qa’ida today are well known: force the US to withdraw from the Middle East and establish Islamic states in the region. Its general strategy is similarly well known: provoke the US into committing ground forces to the region, thereby exhausting its will to remain. But these goals and strategy have evolved over time and are as much a product of circumstances and al-Qa’ida infighting as they are of deliberate planning.

Drawing on newly-declassified al-Qa’ida internal communications from the Defense Department’s Harmony Database, Vahid Brown and his colleagues at the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) have chronicled the emergence of two factions in al-Qa’ida: the planners and the propagandists. Each employed different strategies to achieve their common overarching goals. The first faction was committed to building an effective guerrilla organization and attacking the West in ways similar to other irregular military organizations engaged in asymmetric conflict. In contrast, the second faction wanted to establish al-Qa’ida as a global brand, a battle standard that could inspire and unify groups around the world engaged in violent Islamist resistance.

US policy toward al-Qa’ida after 9/11 placed a premium on diminishing the capabilities of the first faction. Thus, US-led efforts have achieved notable success capturing and killing al-Qa’ida’s leaders and operatives, crippling its organizational structure, and degrading its ability to coordinate terrorist attacks worldwide. As this report points out, however, al-Qa’ida’s real strength has never been as a guerrilla fighting force; rather its strength comes from its ability to transform the local concerns of Islamist activists into what this report describes as “a unifying vision of apocalyptic inter-civilizational conflict”. Because these capabilities and their proponents are still in place, al-Qa’ida continues to achieve success.

Effective counterterrorism must better address these capabilities. The tools and prescriptions needed to do so will fall largely outside the realm of the military options that have done so well against the first faction. Eroding al-Qa’ida’s brand appeal—reducing its share of the ideological marketplace—will require innovative and multi-lateral approaches with the US hand rarely seen or suspected. Furthermore, greater efforts have to be made to degrade its media distribution organs. Finally, aggressive targeting of al-Qa’ida’s senior leaders must continue and will complement efforts to limit its brand appeal. As this report articulates, Usama Bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri are

¹ A transcript of the September 20, 2001 State of the Union Address is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

the incarnation of al-Qa'ida's brand and each new image of them only serve to reinforce the brand's invincibility. Thus, capturing or killing these iconic senior al-Qa'ida leaders will undermine al-Qa'ida's emblematic appeal and help delegitimize the extremist ideology they are selling to the Muslim world.

LTC Joseph H. Felter, Ph.D
Director, Combating Terrorism Center
West Point, New York

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Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in al-Qa’ida from 1989-2006¹

Introduction

From its beginnings in the wake of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, al-Qa’ida has been at war with itself. In disputes that have largely been invisible to the broader public, its leadership has been in a constant battle over what al-Qa’ida should be, what strategy it should pursue, even who its real enemies are. Very early in al-Qa’ida’s development there emerged two factions, one committed to building an effective guerrilla organization and one bent on establishing al-Qa’ida as a global brand, a battle standard that could be taken up by any and all engaged in violent Islamist resistance. Conflict between these two poles has defined every major leadership schism in al-Qa’ida, with the latter camp, led by Usama bin Ladin, victorious nearly every time. In the end, the “brand managers” succeeded in converting al-Qa’ida from an allegiance-based paramilitary organization, complete with formalized hierarchies of command and control into an emblem, an ideological banner capable of inspiring homegrown cells of any size, the members of which pledge allegiance not to any particular person, but to the vision of jihad that al-Qa’ida embodies. The origins and consequences of this long-running conflict, even its existence, remain underappreciated by American policymakers. While the efforts of the United States and its allies to target al-Qa’ida’s organizational capacities have yielded tangible and hard-won gains, more must be done to degrade al-Qa’ida’s ability to control and project its brand – to inspire scattered and isolated Sunni militants to kill in its name.

These are the key insights that emerge from the following analysis of documents declassified from the Harmony Database and made available to the Combating Terrorism Center by the Department of Defense. Though it has long been known that al-Qa’ida has suffered from disunity at the leadership level, these documents allow us to gain a fresh insight into the engine driving those conflicts and illuminate the vulnerabilities that these conflicts have created for the organization.² In what boils down to a struggle between branding and bureaucracy, al-Qa’ida has consistently put its ability to inspire a broader movement over the development of its organizational capacities to pursue strategic military goals. While its guerrilla strategists have fought for the resources to build an effective command-and-control military organization, its two supreme leaders – Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri – have preferred press releases over battlefield preparedness. Al-Qa’ida’s preference for branding, the military incompetence of its autocratic leaders and the unanticipated ferocity of the United States’ response to the attacks of 9/11, have together left the brand managers the only ones standing. This is not to say that al-Qa’ida has not been able to credibly threaten American interests by carrying out isolated but devastating acts of violence; it has. But its real strength has never been

¹ The author of this study is Vahid Brown, a Research Fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

² The most comprehensive study of the open-source information on al-Qa’ida’s internal fault lines is Fawaz Gerges’ *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); as Gerges observes, “The intra-Islamist struggle has not received its share of critical scrutiny and its understanding is vital to shedding light on the inner dynamics and complexities of Islamist and jihadist networks” (p. 110).

as a fighting force, but rather its ability to transform what have traditionally been the local or national concerns of Islamist activism into a vision of apocalyptic inter-civilizational conflict.

The following analysis, grounded in the data from the Harmony documents, charts the history of this transformation and of the internal divisions that surrounded it.³ The Harmony documents shed light on cohesion problems that have been bedeviling Salafi jihadi organizations going back more than thirty years. One of these documents, analyzed in the Combating Terrorism Center’s first Harmony report, provides a lengthy “after-action report” on the failed jihadi activism in Syria in the 1970s and 1980s; its author, Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, identifies disunity and disorganization at the leadership level as the single most important factor in the failure of that movement.⁴ As the evidence from the Harmony documents discussed below shows, this has been a constant challenge for al-Qa’ida as well. While the branding-versus-bureaucracy crux outlined above has consistently been the driving force, at different points in the development of al-Qa’ida the scope and consequences of this leadership struggle have changed.

During the first phase, from the founding of the organization at the close of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan to the return of the leadership to South Asia after its misadventures in Africa, al-Qa’ida had failed in both areas, creating neither an effective guerrilla organization nor a consistent jihadi message.

In the second phase, from al-Qa’ida’s re-establishment in Afghanistan to its dispersal from that refuge by American-led attacks, al-Qa’ida was able to exploit the relative security provided by its uneasy alliance with the Taliban to develop and begin to “market” its anti-American message. Though it was during this period that it was able to carry out the large-scale acts of terror for which it is famous – the 1998 bombings of two American Embassies in Africa and the attacks of September 11, 2001 – internal divisions over the decision to target the United States severely degraded al-Qa’ida’s organizational capacity.

During the third and current phase, which began with the United States’ response to 9/11, al-Qa’ida as a centrally-controlled bureaucracy all but disappeared, with most of its key military and strategic leaders dispersed, captured or killed. In this period al-Qa’ida Central has been largely reduced to a media organization, while the Iraq war has created a market for its message, a field in which jihadis with little or no connection to

³ While data on al-Qa’ida’s leadership schisms from other open-source documents have been included in the following analysis, no attempt has been made to be comprehensive in this regard, as the primary aim of this report is to draw lessons from the material in the Harmony Database.

⁴ “Lessons Learned from the Jihad Ordeal in Syria,” AFGP-2002-600080. For an in-depth analysis of this document, see the Combating Terrorism Center, *Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting Al-Qa’ida’s Organizational Vulnerabilities* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), Part I, available online at http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq_syria.asp. Abu Mus’ab opines that responsibility for the failure of the Syrian jihadi movement “falls squarely on a handful of leaders,” whose “negative contribution ranged from treason and criminal behavior against jihad and the mujahidin to failure from jockeying for leadership positions....” The al-Qa’ida military strategist Abu’l-Walid makes a similar diagnosis on the reasons for the failure of jihad in Syria in AFGP-2002-600970.

the remnants of al-Qa’ida’s central bureaucracy can take up (and thus alter) the al-Qa’ida banner.⁵

1990-1996: al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia

As is well known, al-Qa’ida was born out of a leadership schism. Though they co-founded the Maktab al-Khidamat (also known as the Afghan Services Bureau), which provided logistical support to the Arab volunteers, by the end of the anti-Soviet conflict in Afghanistan ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam and Usama bin Ladin had come to have differing views about many things, not least of them being the future direction of the jihad.⁶ When al-Qa’ida went its own way under Bin Ladin’s leadership, things didn’t get any better. As author Lawrence Wright notes, “The formation of al-Qaeda gave the Arab Afghans something else to fight over.”

Every enterprise that arose in the sparsely populated cultural landscape was contested, and any head that rose above the crowd was a target. The ongoing jihad in Afghanistan became an afterthought in the war of words and ideas that was being fought in the mosques [of Peshawar]. Even the venerable Services Bureau ... was slandered as a CIA front and Azzam as an American stooge.⁷

The earliest witness in the Harmony documents to al-Qa’ida’s leadership-cohesion challenges during this early period comes from an analysis of the Afghan situation in 1989 by the Egyptian jihadi Mustafa Hamid, also known as Abu’l-Walid, written some time after 1996. Abu’l-Walid’s single most important characteristic as it emerges from the Harmony documents is his pragmatism. Though a devout Muslim who shared the broad outlines of Salafi jihadi ideology with his al-Qa’ida brethren – essentially that there is a need for a renewal of Shari’ā-dominant political structures in the Muslim world, and a concomitant need to fight any perceived interference in this revival – Abu’l-Walid approached jihad as, above all else, a military struggle. For Abu’l-Walid, the foremost requirement of a jihadi strategy is that it be *effective*, not that it be ideologically pure or symbolically potent. This predilection for a pragmatic approach to jihad would lead Abu’l-Walid to repeated conflicts over the years with members of the al-Qa’ida leadership who took a more ideological or doctrinaire line.

A long-time veteran of the anti-Soviet jihad, during the 1980s Abu’l-Walid personally knew many of the Arab mujahidin, especially fellow Egyptians, who would go on to take leading roles in al-Qa’ida. Of these he was closest to Abu Hafs al-Misri (aka Muhammad Atef), one of the co-founders of al-Qa’ida and perhaps the leading voice of what Abu’l-Walid and others have described as the “hawkish wing” in al-Qa’ida’s early

⁵ A number of terrorist attacks in Europe since 9/11 – and especially the 7 July 2005 London bombings – have been linked to al-Qa’ida, though it is not clear that al-Qa’ida Central has played anything more than a supportive role in cases where involvement has been established.

⁶ For a lucid account of their decisive disagreements, as well as of the conflicting opinions of the other initial leaders, see Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), pp. 131ff.

⁷ Wright, *Looming Tower*, p. 134.

history.⁸ In the early spring of 1989, Bin Ladin had joined with his Arab mujahidin followers in the disastrous attempt to attack and seize the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, an attack that had been orchestrated by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Bureau (ISI), allegedly with help from the CIA.⁹ Though losses were massive and there was little sign of progress in the early days of the siege, the international network of mujahidin newsletters, itinerant preachers and support organizations touted the battle as being on the verge of victory for the mujahidin, and this sparked the greatest influx of foreign volunteers into Afghanistan since the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. The influential 'Abdullah 'Azzam also published accounts glorifying the courageous "martyrs" rushing to "liberate" the city from Najibullah's communist government, accelerating the rush to the Jalalabad front. In the midst of this surge of support for the attack, a small contingent of prominent mujahidin, including Abu'l-Walid and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri,¹⁰ were trying to sound the alarm and convince the Arab fighters not to join such an ill-prepared and fool-hardy mission, one which Abu'l-Walid likened, in articles he wrote for the jihadi newspapers and magazines at the time, to a horde of children being led to their doom by the pied piper.¹¹

Abu'l-Walid was well aware that the attack plan had allegedly been drafted with ISI and CIA support, and he warned that the mujahidin were being savagely manipulated in the service of geopolitical forces having nothing to do with the jihad.¹² Abu'l-Walid was very upset with 'Azzam for writing his glowing portraits of brave martyrs, but reserved the bulk of his ire for Usama bin Ladin and his military leaders Abu Hafs and Abu 'Ubayda, who had emerged during the course of the battle as the overall commanders of the Arab forces.¹³ After a number of his old mujahidin colleagues were killed in the fruitless attack, Abu'l-Walid let it be known that "had I been in charge, I would have court-martialed Abu 'Abdullah [Usama b. Ladin], Abu 'Ubayda and Abu

⁸ Abu'l-Walid, "The Story of the Afghan Arabs from the Time of the Arrival in Afghanistan until their Departure with the Taliban," part 1, *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 8, 2004; Wright, *Looming Tower*, p. 131 (where the hawkish wing is referred to as the takfiri faction). For a profile of Abu Hafs, see the Combating Terrorism Center, *al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, Appendix B II, available online at http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/Abu_Hafs.pdf.

⁹ See Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), pp. 190-95.

¹⁰ Abu'l-Walid identified Abu Mus'ab al-Suri as having "clashed" with the prevailing opinion in AFGP-2002-600088, p. 12 (page numbers refer to the original Arabic documents, and all translations are my own unless otherwise noted); he further wrote that the mujahidin commander Jalaladdin Haqqani also disapproved of the attack, though the latter did send a few hundred of his men to that front. On Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, see the in-depth monograph by Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹¹ AFGP-2002-600088, p. 14. Abu'l-Walid is fluent in English and often makes references to Western culture; he also frequently cites Western media, such as the New York Times and the BBC.

¹² In AFGP-2002-600088, Abu'l-Walid includes the text of some of the articles he published in the UAE-based newspaper *al-Ittihad* about this at the time, in which he argued that "the battle is being conducted by the international powers, as indicated by the American New York Times."

¹³ Abu'l-Walid says that he "hated Dr. Abdullah's rhetoric," since he was sure that 'Abdullah 'Azzam knew that "Jalalabad was not a battle of faith" (AFGP-2002-600088, p. 2). In another Harmony document written by Abu'l-Walid, he relates that he first met 'Abdullah 'Azzam in November of 1984 but that they did not get on well even then; the major point of contention was their respective assessments of the Afghan leadership of the anti-Soviet mujahidin. 'Azzam, writes Abu'l-Walid, came eventually to idolize these men, especially Sayyaf, Hekmatyar and Rabbani, while Abu'l-Walid's opinion was constantly moving in the opposite direction (AFGP-2002-600087, p. 4).

Hafs and sentenced them to death.”¹⁴ Though they’d not met by this point, word of his comments made it to Bin Ladin, who, not surprisingly, became very angry. At one point Abu'l-Walid met with Abu Hafs and Abu 'Ubayda and asked them to convey a written assessment of the Jalalabad fiasco to Bin Ladin; Abu 'Ubayda returned with the news that “Abu 'Abdullah wished it torn to pieces and scattered to the wind, since his men were achieving victories.”¹⁵ Abu'l-Walid’s assessment of the al-Qa’ida leadership formed during this experience – that “their limited mentality will always be disastrous to their operations”¹⁶ – was one that would only be deepened in the following years, as he began to work more closely with and ultimately rose to top of the ranks of al-Qa’ida.

In 1998, by which time Abu'l-Walid was a member of the Shura Council of al-Qa’ida – the umbrella committee of senior leaders that advises Bin Ladin and has subcommittees with various portfolios – he edited together a lengthy series of diaries and notes that he’d written in 1990 during the siege of Khost, an important series of battles that began during the anti-Soviet war and carried over into the 1989-1992 Afghan civil war between mujahidin warlords and the Najibullah regime; besieged for more than eight years, this eastern Afghan city finally fell to the mujahidin in the spring of 1991.¹⁷ The Afghan mujahidin were led by Jalaluddin Haqqani, a skilled commander who operated under the aegis of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami until 1995, at which time he switched his loyalties to the Taliban.¹⁸ Some of the so-called “Arab Afghans,” or mujahidin volunteers from Arab countries, fought around Khost under Haqqani’s leadership during this period, while many of them formed their own groups, the largest of which was led by Abu'l-Harith al-Urduni. Haqqani was widely recognized as one of the most effective mujahidin commanders in Afghanistan and he was heavily supported with money and arms by the Saudi and Pakistani intelligence agencies; CIA officers stationed in Islamabad at the time viewed Haqqani “as perhaps the most impressive Pashtun field commander in the war.”¹⁹ Haqqani was also very close to Usama bin Ladin – as he is to this day – and it was during this period that Bin Ladin built his cave complex in

¹⁴ AFGP-2002-600088, p. 2.

¹⁵ AFGP-2002-600088, p. 14. Despite Bin Ladin’s optimism, the attack on Jalalabad was a total failure; the city was not captured and the mujahidin lost more than 10,000 fighters.

¹⁶ AFGP-2002-600088, p. 15.

¹⁷ Leading an attack on Khost in the spring of 1987 was Usama bin Ladin’s first foray into direct military involvement in the anti-Soviet jihad; the attack he led was a humiliating failure and earned for the Arab volunteers a reputation for incompetence on the battlefield. For full accounts of this disaster see ‘Isam Diraz (also spelled Essam Deraz), *Usama b. Ladin yarwi ma’arik Masadat al-Ansar al-‘Arab bi-Afghanistan* (Cairo: al-Manar al-Jadid, 1991) and ‘Abd al-Rahim ‘Ali, *Hilf al-irhab: tanzim al-Qa’ida min ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam ila Ayman al-Zawahiri, 1979-2003* (Cairo, 2004), vol. 2, ch. 2; Wright provides a brief account in *The Looming Tower*, pp. 114f.

¹⁸ Haqqani went on to become one of the Taliban’s most important military commanders and, as of the summer of 2007, is a commander of the Taliban contingent that controls North Waziristan in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (where it is believed Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri may be currently hiding); see “Pakistan: Geo News Discussion on Army Operations in Tribal Areas, New Red Mosque,” Karachi, *Geo News TV*, 1 August 2007, OSC translation SAP20070802093001, and Ismail Khan, “Forces, militants heading for truce,” *Dawn* (Karachi), June 23, 2006, available online at <http://www.dawn.com/2006/06/23/top2.htm>.

¹⁹ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars*, p. 202.

Miranshah, North Waziristan, on territory that was then (and is now) under Haqqani's control.²⁰

Abu'l-Walid served as a field commander and propagandist for Haqqani, whom he greatly admired, though he worked with Abu'l-Harith's group at various times as well.²¹ Abu'l-Walid's pragmatism is evident at the beginning of his Khost memoirs, where he writes that he chose to work with Haqqani because he felt the latter was most likely of all the mujahidin warlords to decisively end the military crisis and in-fighting that followed the Soviet withdrawal and finally put an end to communist rule of Afghanistan.²² It was in the course of working with Haqqani in the battle for Khost that Abu'l-Walid began his working relationship with al-Qa'ida and its senior leadership.

In early 1990, after meeting with his old colleague Abu Hafs, Abu'l-Walid was invited to address two of al-Qa'ida's training camps: the Jihad Wal camp in Khost and another across the border in Miranshah, North Waziristan.²³ At Jihad Wal he lectured on the political situation in Afghanistan with the jihadi ideologue Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, who would also go on to hold a position in al-Qa'ida's Shura Council. Their class was a disaster; according to Abu'l-Walid, the audience, which included "all of the important cadres of the al-Qa'ida organization, including Usama bin Ladin," broke into arguing factions and began declaring different parties infidels (*takfir*).²⁴ While he doubted that their *takfiri* denunciations extended to him personally, Abu'l-Walid was convinced that the enmity that some of the members of al-Qa'ida's hawkish wing developed for him at this time played a role in further problems he would have with al-Qa'ida later that year.²⁵

During this and subsequent meetings with Abu Hafs, Abu'l-Walid set out a plan to stage a continuous month-long rocket attack on the critically important Khost airstrip, a three-kilometer long landing area that had been an essential part of the Soviet supply line and remained so during the civil war against Najibullah. Surrounded on land by mujahidin, the city relied on the airport as its only source of supplies and thus vital to its ability to resist the siege. Al-Qa'ida agreed to support Abu'l-Walid's plan, who would serve as the field commander for the operation, but, as he detailed at great length and in

²⁰ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, p. 157; Miranshah is just across the Pak-Afghan border from Khost and was the staging area for the foreign mujahidin involved in the battle of Khost. As Coll notes, Bin Ladin's heavy investments in this and another complex west of Peshawar (called the Parrot's Beak) were criticized by 'Azzam as a waste of money that could have been better spent in Afghanistan. On Haqqani's leading role in the Taliban in North Waziristan, see Ismail Khan, *op. cit.*

²¹ The siege of Khost became the stuff of jihadi legend and, as noted by Loretta Napoleoni, "For a mujahed, having participated in the battle of Khost is a sign of prestige; this is why some people have claimed that al Zarqawi was part of the Arab-Afghan brigade" led by Abu'l-Harith al-Urduni, though in fact Zarqawi arrived in Afghanistan after the fall of Khost; *Insurgent Iraq: Al Zarqawi and the New Generation* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), p. 239n. 2.

²² AFGP-2002-600090, p. 1.

²³ AFGP-2002-600090, pp. 2 and 28. The Jihad Wal course was given in January of 1990; the date of the course in Miranshah is not mentioned but was probably during the same month, as Abu Hafs communicated Usama bin Ladin's anger at the content of Abu'l-Walid's lectures (as well as for Abu'l-Walid's writings about the Jalalabad disaster) during a meeting with Abu'l-Walid in early February.

²⁴ AFGP-2002-600090, p. 2.

²⁵ Ibid. While he does not elaborate on particular issues discussed by Abu Mus'ab or himself that may have ignited the controversy, it is clear in other documents that Abu'l-Walid deeply disagreed with the al-Qa'ida leadership at this time over the latter's assessments of various mujahidin wardlords. Abu'l-Walid had a particularly low opinion of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, while the latter was well-liked by Bin Ladin, who continually sought various kinds of alliance between al-Qa'ida and Hekmatyar's group.

daily diary entries during the operation, al-Qa’ida proved to be an utterly incompetent collaborator, forcing Abu’l-Walid throughout the airport attack to rely on his long-standing relationships with Haqqani and Abu’l-Harith to obtain needed supplies and logistical support.²⁶

Abu’l-Walid’s attack on the Khost airport lasted from 16 August to 11 September 1990. Just one week before the operation began, while setting up a network of posts that would fire rockets at different points of the airstrip, Abu’l-Walid received a letter from Abu Hafs on behalf of Usama bin Ladin asking him to send all his men originating from the Arabian Gulf to Peshawar. Bin Ladin was gathering an army of Gulf Arab mujahidin that he hoped to send to Saudi Arabia to protect it from Saddam Hussein’s armies, which had invaded Kuwait at the beginning of that month.²⁷ All Gulf mujahidin were ordered to comply, with the exception of those working as trainers in al-Qa’ida’s camps; in addition, Bin Ladin ordered that a distance-determining telescope that had been given to Abu’l-Walid for the operation be returned to Peshawar. Having already discovered that al-Qa’ida was “not generous at all in supporting the airport project with its staff” and “did not provide enough administrative support,” this request made Abu’l-Walid furious and he came close to severing his relationship with the organization. Rather than sacrifice the operation he sent along the telescope and the personnel, though “once again I was astonished by the al-Qa’ida leadership, that they would pull their cadres from an operation of such vital importance and yet not recall a single trainer from their military camps, full of young tourists from Saudi Arabia and Yemen.”²⁸

On August 12 Abu’l-Walid wrote in his diary about al-Qa’ida’s “lack of focus and interest,” and of his continuing frustration in seeking support for the airport operation. He wrote that the organization “was unable to focus on a battle unless Abu ‘Abdullah – Usama bin Ladin – were leading it himself,” an autocratic approach that Abu’l-Walid thought “unhealthy.”²⁹ Throughout the course of the operation he frequently and angrily relates details of various failures on al-Qa’ida’s part; the latter are too slow in responding to requests, provide less than a third of the supplies Abu’l-Walid requests, fail to send along promised equipment and generally demonstrate complete administrative incompetence.³⁰ “The way that al-Qa’ida’s administrative people behaved gave me no reason to have any confidence in them whatsoever,” he wrote on August 16.³¹ When the attacks on the airport succeeded in forcing Najibullah’s planes to use an alternate landing site, Abu’l-Walid’s plan to shift his attack to that location was unable to proceed, as “al-Qa’ida was silent as the sphinx” and the men under his command would not act without clear orders from Bin Ladin.³² Abu’l-Walid traveled to Peshawar to personally get a

²⁶ More than eighty pages in length, the account of the Khost airstrip operation consists largely of excerpts from Abu’l-Walid’s daily diaries that were compiled by him, with connecting narrative obviously written after the operation was over, in March of 1999; AFGP-2002-600092.

²⁷ AFGP-2002-600092, p. 10; Abu’l-Walid includes the text of the letter from Abu Hafs. The Saudi government of course turned down Bin Ladin’s offer of a mujahidin army to protect the Kingdom, and instead agreed to a U.S. military presence to deter an invasion from Saddam.

²⁸ Ibid. In a later meeting with Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, who by this time was working for al-Qa’ida, al-Suri also voiced his criticism for Bin Ladin having pulled the Gulf Arab mujahidin from the battlefields in order to send them to Saudi Arabia (AFGP-2002-600092, p. 37).

²⁹ AFGP-2002-600092, p. 16.

³⁰ AFGP-2002-600092, pp. 19, 21-2, 25, 40, 55 and *passim*.

³¹ AFGP-2002-600092, p. 22.

³² AFGP-2002-600092, p. 80.

decision from the al-Qa’ida leadership regarding their willingness to increase their participation; “of course,” writes Abu’l-Walid, “I failed in my mission.”³³

During the middle of his operation against the Khost airport, Abu’l-Walid had a meeting with al-Qa’ida leaders Abu Hafs and Abu Usama al-Libi, and in his revealing account of their conversation one of the recurring themes of al-Qa’ida’s organizational vulnerabilities stands out: Arab chauvinism. Many of the Harmony documents provide evidence that al-Qa’ida is constantly challenged in its efforts to garner popular support by its disdain for non-Arab locals, be they Somalis, Uzbeks or Afghanis.³⁴ In his meeting with Abu Hafs and Abu Usama, Abu’l-Walid discussed with them the role the Afghani situation was to play in the context of the larger Arab and Islamic jihadi strategy. Abu’l-Walid writes that he took the minority view that, with a well-executed military strategy, the mujahidin could effectively take control of the country and establish an Islamic state, thus thwarting the post-Cold War designs of the United States vis-à-vis the Islamist movement.³⁵ Abu Hafs and Abu Usama, however, expressed the view that the Afghani people were not qualified for such an undertaking, as they were generally all “thieves and liars,” and that the most that could be hoped from Afghanistan at that stage was space in which to train some Arab cadres who could bring their skills back to their home countries to wage jihad there.³⁶

Another Harmony document dating to this period is especially revealing of these particular differences at the leadership level over what the next stage of the jihadi movement should be. This remarkable document, which explicitly corroborates Abu’l-Walid’s just-mentioned account of the views expressed by al-Qa’ida leadership in his Khost memoirs, appears to be a survey of a number of leading Arab individuals and organizations involved in the Afghan jihad, with a series of questions followed by brief answers from each of the respondents. Though garbled with nonsense characters, it clearly lists responses from Usama bin Ladin, Abu’l-Walid, Abu Mus’ab al-Suri and others to a list of questions involving their respective positions on what level of participation the Arab jihadi groups should have in Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal, and toward what end; what they thought about the various Afghan warlords; and what their views were of Benazir Bhutto, whose first term as Prime Minister of Pakistan began in December of 1988 and ended in August of 1990.³⁷ In each case the longest answer is in response to the question of involvement in Afghanistan. Though

³³ AFGP-2002-600092, p. 81.

³⁴ Al-Qa’ida has struggled to diminish this aspect of itself in its public presentation, and even in internal documents it tries to inculcate a “pan-Islamic” ethos; in a document that outlines the structure and policies of the organization, one of the items under the heading “general policies” is the following: “Eliminate regionalism and tribalism. We wage jihad anywhere in Muslim lands if the situation calls for it and we have the capacity to do so” (AFGP-2002-000080, p. 2). But compare this with “Letters from bin Laden,” AFGP-2002-003345, part one, pp. 21-22, where he addresses Saudis as God’s “most preeminent worshippers and His most honored followers of Islam,” a rather clear indication of his Arab prejudices.

³⁵ Throughout his writings Abu’l-Walid refers to his view that, following the defeat of the Soviets, the United States had no further use for Islamists and would from then on pursue a foreign policy designed to wipe out Islamist movements throughout the world.

³⁶ AFGP-2002-600092, pp. 61f.

³⁷ This document can be dated to between August of 1990 and July of 1993, as the latest datable internal reference is to Nawaz Sharif taking office as Pakistan’s PM following Bhutto; Sharif’s term ended in July 1993. The document includes responses from ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, who died in November of 1989, so it likely began to be compiled towards the beginning of this 1990-1993 window.

there were nine respondents, the following are the five responses of those directly involved at some point in al-Qa'ida's leadership, addressing the question of "what is your position on battle participation in Afghanistan and for what reasons"³⁸:

'Abdullah 'Azzam: [there should be] token participation for the purpose of raising the Afghans' morale, training the Arabs, and spreading the spirit of jihad among the Arabs, with the long-term goal being the waging of jihad against the Jews in Palestine.³⁹

Usama bin Ladin: deep participation in the battles in accordance with the political and strategic vision of the leadership in Peshawar, with the long-term goal being the liberation of South Yemen from communism.⁴⁰

Egyptian Islamic Jihad: participation in battles for the purpose of training personnel in a battlefield environment. Nothing is to be hoped for from the war in Afghanistan, nor will there arise an Islamic State there, on account of doctrinal/ideological defects (*khalal al-'aqa'id*) among the leaders and the masses. Egypt is the heart of the Islamic world and it is necessary to establish the Caliphate there first.⁴¹

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri: participation for the purpose of training cadres and for forming a jihadi organization or coordinated organizations. Fighting in Afghanistan is a religious duty, though it is a lost cause.⁴²

Abu'l-Walid, Mustafa Hamid: total participation with the Islamic mujahidin forces in Afghanistan for the purpose of achieving a military and political victory for the sake of Islam and for transforming Afghanistan into a base (*qa'ida*) of support for the Muslim peoples, providing them with military cadres and expertise and shelter and support for the needy.⁴³

Abu'l-Walid's was clearly the minority position, and since the prevailing view of the al-Qa'ida leadership was that the jihad in Afghanistan was "a lost cause," in the

³⁸ This question, as well as the others address by each of the respondents, can be found at AFGP-2002-600086, pp. 20f. The other four respondents are Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan (pp. 2 and 26), al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya in Egypt (pp. 7 and 31), the International Muslim Brotherhood (p. 3) and a certain Abu Usama, 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Ali (perhaps the Abu Usama al-Libi mentioned above, but there other possibilities as well; this could be the Balluchi al-Qa'ida member 'Ali 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Ali, and it could also be the Egyptian jihadi Ali Mohamed, who used the pseudonym Abu Usama while in Afghanistan during the early 1990s).

³⁹ AFGP-2002-600086, pp. 1 and 22.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 2 and 40.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 6 and 29; interestingly, this opinion comes under the heading "Egyptian Islamic Jihad" rather than its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who is not named in the document.

⁴² AFGP-2002-600086, pp. 9f. and 35.

⁴³ AFGP-2002-600086, pp. 16 and 39. Abu Usama, 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Ali is cited as having the following position: "very limited participation for the purpose of training and then returning to the homeland [Egypt?] for waging the necessary jihad there with all available means. There is no hope for Afghanistan and what is happening therein is not a jihad – rather, it is simply a war, and not one carried out according to the rules and conditions of Islamic law [regarding warfare]" (ibid., pp. 8 and 32).

following year the entire organization moved to Sudan. Abu'l-Walid remained in Afghanistan and took charge of the remnants of the al-Qa'ida infrastructure – chiefly the network of training camps – and oversaw the training of new jihadi cadres that began at this time to come to the camps from the former Soviet Central Asian countries. In addition to providing training to the jihadis from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) that began streaming to Jihad Wal and other camps, Abu'l-Walid directed al-Qa'ida's largest operation in Afghanistan during this period: the “Furqan Project,” which provided military training and support to members of Tajikistan's Nahda Party (also known as the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan), an Islamist political party that fought alongside other anti-government groups in the 1992-1997 Tajikistan civil war.⁴⁴

In a series of five letters addressed to the al-Qa'ida leadership then located in Sudan and Somalia, Abu'l-Walid reveals that al-Qa'ida's house remained divided throughout this period.⁴⁵ In his first letter to the Africa Corps, dated 30 September 1993, he bluntly points to “a chronic error regarding political guidance” that plagued al-Qa'ida's activities in Afghanistan and continued to do so in Somalia.⁴⁶ Abu'l-Walid writes that military action must proceed according to a plan and in pursuit of specific goals, and that “waging jihad like a rhinoceros is stupid and futile.”⁴⁷ He returns several times to the question of al-Qa'ida's objectives in Somalia, chiding the team that was involved in the clash with American forces in Mogadishu (i.e., the “Black Hawk Down” incident) with having forgotten why it was there in the first place in the wake of this “victory.”⁴⁸ “Here I remind you yet again,” writes Abu'l-Walid, “of one your fatal mistakes, which is the hasty changing of strategic targets, whereby now every action is tactical and improvised. Despite whatever success some of these operations may have, the general lines of the course of action will vanish, lose their direction, and ultimately all of the gains that were made could be forfeited. This is an oppressive burden on our already afflicted *umma*.”⁴⁹

Abu'l-Walid repeatedly criticizes the ideological hindrances that al-Qa'ida cadres impose on their selection of local partnerships, suggesting that “al-Qa'ida's Salafi predilections have led it to seek a political ally in Somalia with the same ideological

⁴⁴ Jamal al-Fadl also testified to al-Qa'ida's training and support of the Nahda movement; *U.S. v. Osama Bin Laden et al.*, S(7) 98 Cr. 1023, S.D.N.Y., February 7, 2001, pp. 354f. As indicated in one of Abu'l-Walid's letters, the project had a center in the northern Afghan province of Kunduz, which borders Tajikistan (AFGP-2002-600053, p. 18).

⁴⁵ For an in-depth analysis of al-Qa'ida's (largely failed) efforts in Africa at this time, see the Combating Terrorism Center's previous Harmony report, *al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, available online at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aqII.asp>.

⁴⁶ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 1. All five of the letters in this Harmony document were unmistakably written by Abu'l-Walid, though in four of them he uses the pseudonym Hassan al-Tajiki. He appears not to have been too concerned about hiding his identity, however, since in the third letter, which is signed Hassan al-Tajiki, he encloses a letter addressed to the Nahda leadership which is signed Abu'l-Walid, clearly identifying both letters as having one and the same author. In the fifth letter, “Hassan al-Tajiki” refers to his age and Egyptian origins as well. (al-Qa'ida operatives not infrequently take on the place-names of their current area of activity, e.g., the Egyptian Saif al-Adel used the pseudonym Omar al-Somali while directing operations in Somalia.)

⁴⁷ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 2.

⁴⁸ AFGP-2002-600053, pp. 12-14.

⁴⁹ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 14. (The *umma* is the global Muslim community, irrespective of national borders.)

focus,” an approach he labels “a great calamity.”⁵⁰ He argues that the cadres must seek the lesser of various evils, not some hoped-for ideal; the question facing jihadi activism is not whether it will have a Salafi, Sufi or Muslim Brotherhood stripe, but whether it will survive at all.⁵¹ Salafi or not, Abu'l-Walid urges al-Qa'ida in Somalia to find people they could effectively work with.⁵²

The five letters also reveal a lack of commitment on the part of the al-Qa'ida leadership in supporting the remaining infrastructure in Afghanistan. Abu'l-Walid rebukes the al-Qa'ida leadership for “having washed its hands of the Central Asian region,” as this was “a complete contradiction of the founding charter of al-Qa'ida and of its very watchword, which is universal jihad.”

Even though I opposed this policy, as it goes beyond the scope of al-Qa'ida's capabilities, al-Qa'ida committed to it nonetheless and even took steps to realize it. But beware the danger of any organization abandoning its foundational objectives, for such is the beginning of the end.⁵³

Withdrawing from its birthplace in South Asia to focus on the “heartland” Arab regions was a betrayal of al-Qa'ida's original purpose, and Abu'l-Walid writes that he fears al-Qa'ida will go the way of the Egyptian Islamist groups, who splintered into organizations focused on progressively more trivial matters and smaller theaters of action. “I even heard about specific organizations for neighborhoods,” he writes. “These organizations would start out around a ‘fatwa section,’ i.e., some genius suffering from juridical diarrhea who deemed himself capable of resolving any issue in heaven or earth.”

As in the Khost operations, Abu'l-Walid refers again and again to insufficient allocations of resources to the Furqan Project and the training facilities in general, noting in 1994 that he had “appealed constantly to you for very humble human and financial support, but it fell on deaf ears.”⁵⁴ In the latter half of 1994, Usama bin Ladin directed most of the remaining al-Qa'ida personnel working on the Furqan Project to relocate to Khartoum. In a letter written to the leadership in Sudan by one Abu 'Ata al-Sharqi from the Jihad Wal camp in Khost, the author refers to the happiness of most of the “brothers” at this order, as they are weary of the problems facing their work in Afghanistan; in a further indication of al-Qa'ida's chauvinism, the author writes that “I know with certainty that the problems will never end so long as we remain among our Tatar brothers.”⁵⁵ He also notes, however, that Abu'l-Walid was “very upset” by this order, as the latter had

⁵⁰ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 1. On Salafism, see the Combating Terrorism Center's *Militant Ideology Atlas*, ed. William McCants, pp. 5-6, available online here: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/atlas/Atlas-ExecutiveReport.pdf>.

⁵¹ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 2.

⁵² AFGP-2002-600053, p. 4. For an analysis of the problems that plagued al-Qa'ida's attempts to partner with Islamist groups in Somalia, see the Somalia case study in *al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, available online at: http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq_somaliaII.asp.

⁵³ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 31.

⁵⁴ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 31.

⁵⁵ AFGP-2002-800581, p. 5. In an earlier letter by this Abu 'Ata al-Sharqi, written in March of 1994 and addressed to Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida's military leadership, he refers to many of the same problems, complaining of lack of coordination and communication in the running of the various training camps in Afghanistan and relating Abu'l-Walid's concerns that the camps lack a single clear chain of command, leading to conflicts over the use of resources between the various camps (AFGP-2002-600106).

already sent a messenger to the Uzbeks inviting them to come and receive training. Abu ‘Ata writes that Abu’l-Walid saw the chance to work with the Uzbeks as a unique opportunity that shouldn’t be wasted; several arguments ensued, and ultimately Abu ‘Ata and the rest of the cadres agreed to remain until they could finish the training of the Uzbeks, and to write a letter to this effect to Bin Ladin giving the latter the option to countermand Abu’l-Walid.⁵⁶ Abu’l-Walid refers to this in a letter of his own, in which he asks “that you temporarily freeze your decision to withdraw the cadres until you have the opportunity to discuss the entire matter once more with a representative that will come to you specifically for this purpose.”⁵⁷ His entreaty was apparently of no avail, as it was not long after this that Abu’l-Walid himself moved to Khartoum, though within months he had to move back, as the entire al-Qa’ida organization was forced out of Sudan and sought refuge with the newly-ascendant Taliban.⁵⁸

1996-2001: The Taliban Refuge and the War with America

Al-Qa’ida’s return to Afghanistan saw the beginning of a new phase of its activities, bringing with it a new set of leadership problems. Organizational dysfunction continued to dog its operations, and Bin Ladin’s financial resources had been significantly degraded by the fiasco in Sudan.⁵⁹ As noted by journalist Alan Cullison, who purchased a hard drive that had belonged to al-Qa’ida in Kabul in late 2001, “not all Arabs were happy with the move.”

Afghanistan, racked by more than a decade of civil war and Soviet occupation, struck many as unfit to be the capital of global *jihad*. *Jihadis* complained about the food, the bad roads, and the Afghans themselves, who, they said, were uneducated, venal, and not to be trusted.⁶⁰

More importantly, two issues emerged during this period that created an unprecedented level of disunity within al-Qa’ida, from the leadership down to the rank and file: al-Qa’ida’s relationship with the Taliban and Usama bin Ladin’s decision to directly attack the United States.

The Harmony documents from this period continue to reflect widespread leadership failures at the administrative level. For example, in a letter that appears to have been authored by Sayf al-Islam al-Misri, who had earlier been in charge of certain operations in Somalia, the author lays out a series of complaints about organizational malfunction at the Jihad Wal training camp, at which he had just completed a term of

⁵⁶ AFGP-2002-800581, pp. 4-6.

⁵⁷ AFGP-2002-600053, p. 31.

⁵⁸ On al-Qa’ida’s forced move back to Afghanistan, see Wright, *Looming Tower*, Chapters 12-13.

⁵⁹ The financial losses, coupled with a lack of employment prospects, suitable schools and other perceived elements of Afghanistan’s “backwardness” led at this point to a significant degree of personnel attrition; for example, according to testimony from L’Houssaine Kherchtou, almost the entire Libyan contingent of al-Qa’ida members broke from the organization at this time (*U.S. v. Usama bin Laden et al.* S(7) 98 Cr. 1023, S.D.N.Y., February 22, 2001, pp. 1281-82).

⁶⁰ “Inside Al-Qaeda’s Hard Drive,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September, 2004, available online at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200409/cullison>.

service as the camp's amir (leader). Sayf al-Islam writes bitterly that he was made the leader of the camp with insufficient prior knowledge of the camp's inner workings and logistics and that there was little overlap time between his term as leader and that of the previous amir, making it impossible for him to get up to speed or resolve questions that arose in the course of his tenure. He prays to God to not be put through a similar experience again, and writes that the whole issue "still pains me immensely."⁶¹ Nor was this problem unique to Sayf al-Islam or the Jihad Wal camp. In mid June of 2000, in a list of questions submitted by camp trainees to be addressed by Bin Ladin, the latter is asked, "We often hear that you are not fully aware of the camp's organization and some people say the instructors act on their own. What is your answer to this accusation?"⁶²

Abu'l-Walid also continued to frankly communicate his assessments of al-Qa'ida's persistent organizational failures. In his list of recommendations and questions submitted to Usama bin Ladin after having led a series of trainings at one of the al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan in the summer of 2000, Abu'l-Walid presses Bin Ladin to adhere to regularity in holding meetings of al-Qa'ida's Shura Council, recommending that he deputize Abu Hafs to chair such meetings in Bin Ladin's absence if necessary.⁶³ He also notes that most of al-Qa'ida's operations continue to lack any organization or systematization, and appear to be "random chaos." "Is improving organization progressing randomly as well, or according to some sort of system," he asks.⁶⁴ He also points out that recruitment has aimed at quantity over quality and has not been methodically regulated, and complains that there is a lack of coordination between the processing of trainees at the camps and the initiation of operations, which leads to a reduction in the number of trainees who can immediately be absorbed into operations.⁶⁵

The decision to ally al-Qa'ida with the Taliban and to give a pledge of allegiance to Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad 'Umar was an especially divisive development during this period. There is a great deal of information in the Harmony documents reflecting internal divisions over a variety of issues having to do with al-Qa'ida's relationship to the Taliban. A faction that was based in Peshawar, Pakistan, argued that it was heretical for al-Qa'ida to put itself at the service of the Taliban, as the latter were Islamically deviant and puppets of Pakistan's ISI. In one letter, the unknown author refers derisively to the Taliban as having a mentality "based on fabrications, wrongdoing, beating around the bush and running away from reality," and bemoans their seeking a seat at the United Nations, a perfidious act for which they were making "insignificant excuses."⁶⁶ In a letter written by a certain 'Abd al-Hamid, who was later identified in the

⁶¹ "Saif al-Islam's Report on the Jihad-Wal Camp," AFGP-2002-600108.

⁶² AFGP-2002-801138, p. 163, question 3.

⁶³ AFGP-2002-801138, p. 1,

⁶⁴ AFGP-2002-801138, p. 218.

⁶⁵ AFGP-2002-801138, p. 218.

⁶⁶ "Political Speculation," AFGP-2002-602181. The identities of neither the author nor the addressee are stated in the letter, though the former refers to his having learned about the Taliban's lame excuses for continuing to seek a seat at the UN from Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. This rather contentious letter goes on to express disagreement with a number of opinions expressed by the addressee, including the reasons for the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas and the role Iran will play in the future of Islamism and the conflict with the West. The issue of the Taliban seeking a seat at the UN comes up repeatedly in internal arguments about al-Qa'ida's Taliban alliance; Abu Qatada al-Filistini devotes an entire chapter to this in one of his justifications of this alliance.

London-based Islamist press as Syrian jihadi Baha' Mustafa Jughl,⁶⁷ the author writes that “We differ with our people here about the Taliban regime; they see them as God’s righteous saints, while we view them as heretics and apostates.”⁶⁸ This author composed a treatise to prove the heresy of the Taliban, full of “evidences and proofs,” but when he shared it with fellow members of al-Qa’ida, “they only became more recalcitrant and estranged.” The treatise and its author were denounced to Abu Qatada al-Filistini, a leading al-Qa’ida ideologue operating out of London, and Abu Qatada wrote a book refuting ‘Abd al-Hamid’s anti-Taliban treatise, a book which ‘Abd al-Hamid complains “was full of lies and false accusations.”⁶⁹ ‘Abd al-Hamid was also denounced by the jihadi ideologue Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, though he says that the latter “was the most well-mannered of [those who denounced me]; just imagine a group in which the most well-mannered is the likes of Abu Mus’ab al-Suri!”⁷⁰

‘Abd al-Hamid’s opinions are echoed in another Harmony document from this period, signed only Abu Mus’ab but likely written by Abu Mus’ab Reuters, the pseudonym of Muhammad Najah ‘Abd al-Maqsd, who reportedly was known as “Reuters” because he monitored the international media for al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan in the early 1990s.⁷¹ Abu Mus’ab Reuters was also a member of the Peshawar-based group that opposed al-Qa’ida’s alliance with the Taliban and labeled the latter unbelievers. In a letter addressed simply to “Abu Muhammad” – likely Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the influential jihadi ideologue and one-time mentor of Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi⁷² – Abu

⁶⁷ Muhammad al-Shafi’i, “Min al-watha’iq al-sirri al-Amirikiyya: ‘Abd al-Hamid yukashif li-qiyadi min al-Qa’ida ‘Mikiyafiliyya’ Abu Mus’ab al-Suri,” (“In secret American documents, ‘Abd al-Hamid reveals Abu Mus’ab al-Suri’s ‘Machiavellianism’ to al-Qa’ida leadership”), *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, November 17, 2006. The “secret American documents” referred to in the title are the Harmony documents hosted on the website of the Combating Terrorism Center and publicly accessible here:

http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony_docs.asp.

⁶⁸ AFGP-2002-601402.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Abu Qatada’s lengthy response can be found at various places online, including this site: <http://www.geocities.com/abokatada/books/joena/joena.html>. Abu Qatada is currently in prison in the UK, having appealed a February 2007 decision by a British court that he could be deported to Jordan.

⁷⁰ AFGP-2002-601402, p. 1. Abu Qatada and Abu Mus’ab al-Suri have also had serious ideological disputes with each other; see the forthcoming monograph on al-Suri by Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus’ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 182ff. Thanks to Dr. Lia for generously sharing his research.

⁷¹ Abu Mus’ab Reuters later operated a website called *al-Muwahhidun* or “The Monotheists,” which was often critical of al-Qa’ida and especially of the alliance with the Taliban. He was deported from Pakistan to Egypt in 2002. See “Egyptian Lawyer Cited in Detention of al-Qa’ida ‘Media Official’,” OSC translation GMP20021215000105. According to an article published in the Cairo daily *Al-Ahram*, Abu Mus’ab Reuters’ relationship with Bin Ladin was soured by a 1992 article in which Abu Mus’ab denounced the Muslim Brotherhood, while at the time Bin Ladin was trying to forge links with Brotherhood-connected Yemeni tribes (“Bin Ladin’s Press Secretary Interrogated in Egypt,” *Al-Ahram*, December 14, 2002, OSC trans. GMP20021217000116). Abu Mus’ab Reuters and ‘Abd al-Hamid were friends; when reporters from *al-Sharq al-Awsat* visited ‘Abd al-Hamid’s home in Peshawar five months before the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan in 2001, they were met there by Abu Mus’ab Reuters (al-Shafi’i, “Min al-watha’iq al-sirri”).

⁷² When referring to Zarqawi, the author of the letter calls him “your friend Zarqawi.” Zarqawi is revealed in this letter as a *takfiri* extremist, charging everyone from the mujahidin in Bosnia, Tajikistan and Chechnya to the Taliban governor of Jalalabad with infidelity; he also suffers, writes the author, from an excessive love of leadership. The author of the letter mentions that at one time Zarqawi told him he would not fight under conditions wherein he deemed the leadership to be Islamically deviant, but that Zarqawi later changed his mind after reading a lengthy tract by Abu Mus’ab al-Suri which argued for the permissibility of fighting jihad under the banner of an infidel group.

Mus'ab Reuters refers to a recent gathering of prominent al-Qa'ida and al-Qa'ida-affiliated individuals in Peshawar that included Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the above-mentioned 'Abd al-Hamid, and a certain Abu Mujahid. At this gathering the author presented arguments for regarding the Taliban as outright infidels, their organization "created and controlled by Pakistan."⁷³ Abu Mus'ab Reuters also refers in this letter to Abu Qatada al-Filistini and the latter's refutation of 'Abd al-Hamid's anti-Taliban tract (which the author says he co-wrote with 'Abd al-Hamid), and writes that "I know this man [Abu Qatada] well and want to expose him to the world. When everyone was fighting the Soviets, he was an advisor to the devil. He came to Peshawar after it was all over and issued fatwas in return for Saudi dollars, calling the Sudanese government an Islamic Emirate."⁷⁴ Later he went to Europe and helped Bush's wishes come true..." Finally, the author refers to a previous letter he'd received from Abu Muhammad that criticized Ayman al-Zawahiri; the author chides Abu Muhammad for being too hasty in his judgment and attempts to explain Zawahiri's position.⁷⁵

Another witness to this internal opposition to alignment with the Taliban – and perhaps in reference to the same group in Peshawar mentioned above – can be found in a report on the state of jihadi affairs in Afghanistan written *circa* October 1998.⁷⁶ This unsigned report discusses the military successes of the Taliban, the global responses to these developments, and the immediate aftermath in Afghanistan following the U.S. missile attack on al-Qa'ida camps in 1998 and Mullah 'Umar's subsequent refusal to extradite Bin Laden or any of the latter's followers. The final page of the report addresses "controversies surrounding the Taliban and denunciations of them."⁷⁷ The author identifies the most important misgiving raised by certain "young men" against the Taliban as being the latter's "tomb worship" (*ibada al-qubur*), a broad "crime" in the eyes of Salafi jihadis which refers to local religious practices surrounding the tombs of Muslims saints or historically-important holy people.⁷⁸ The author points out that this denunciation of the Taliban is based on the assumption that a lack of Taliban efforts to eradicate these practices amounts to a Taliban endorsement of them, and further that this endorsement is sufficiently serious to warrant *takfir*, or charging the Taliban as a whole with infidelity. The author raises vehement objections to this *takfiri* tendency among some of al-Qa'ida's ranks, pointing out that the people making these accusations have no actual proof that the Taliban has committed any religious deviations and are relying on hearsay. Observing that rumor and hearsay are the greatest threat to internal unity, the author ends his report by quoting scripture: "The Prophet said, 'Man sins enough [to earn

⁷³ AFGP-2002-601693.

⁷⁴ Abu Mus'ab al-Suri makes a similar criticism of Abu Qatada, charging him with having come to Afghanistan too late to have any real jihadi credentials; see Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad*, p. 185.

⁷⁵ AFGP-2002-601693.

⁷⁶ The author of the letter refers to the August 1998 American cruise missile attacks on al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan as having taken place "within about the last two months" (AFGP-2002-003472, p. 4; the first three pages of the document are not extant).

⁷⁷ AFGP-2002-003472, p. 6

⁷⁸ As such practices sometimes include the seeking of particular blessings or intercession from a departed saint or Sufi mystic, it is common in Salafi discourse to consider these shrine-oriented religious practices as violations of absolute monotheism (*tawhid*), insofar as one is "praying to" a dead person and not to God alone. The Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia is notorious for not only denouncing these practices but for destroying ancient shrine sites, including many in Arabia associated with the life of the Prophet Muhammad.

damnation] by relating everything that he hears.⁷⁹ How, then, will it be for one who passes judgments of infidelity on the basis of everything that he hears?"⁸⁰

There was also considerable confusion surrounding the al-Qa'ida-Taliban alliance expressed in questionnaires submitted to the leadership by camp trainees. Though Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad had by this time joined itself to al-Qa'ida, it appears that there was friction in the Egyptian camp about pledging fealty to Mullah 'Umar. In a series of questions submitted to camp leaders in February of 2001, a number of people asked for clarifications about these disputes and perceived contradictions; one person asked why some of the leaders of Islamic Jihad had refused to pledge allegiance to Mullah 'Umar and the Taliban, and wondered if there were some finer point of Islamic law that prevented them from doing so.⁸¹ Another asks why the Jihad organization keeps splintering, and several people submitted questions about the failure of closed-door meetings of Jihad leaders to resolve their differences.⁸²

The other major fault line within al-Qa'ida during this period surrounded the decision of Usama bin Ladin to directly strike at the United States.⁸³ As is well known, Bin Ladin's frequent pre-9/11 media appearances, in which he called for a jihad against Americans everywhere, were perceived by the Taliban leadership as breaches of their agreements, and Mullah 'Umar ordered Bin Ladin to relocate from Jalalabad to Kandahar in 1997. Bin Ladin's anti-American rhetoric also endangered al-Qa'ida's continuing operations in the Horn of Africa; in a letter written in August of 1997 by 'Abdullah Muhammad Fazul, a leading operative in the eventually-successful plot to bomb the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Fazul anxiously refers to the new and serious risks of capture that had emerged following Bin Ladin's declaration of war on the United States, and complains that he had first heard about this declaration while watching CNN.⁸⁴ Later that same month the FBI raided the Nairobi home of Fazul's accomplice Wadih el-Hage.

Bin Ladin's antics also angered al-Qa'ida leaders in Afghanistan. In a 1999 email addressed to Bin Ladin from Abu Khalid al-Suri (aka Muhammad Bahayah) and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri – the latter having by that time become part of Mullah 'Umar's inner circle – Bin Ladin is chastised for not abiding by his pledge of allegiance to Mullah 'Umar, the "Commander of the Faithful." They warn that Bin Ladin's rogue activities

⁷⁹ This *hadith*, or reported saying of the Prophet, comes from the *Sunan Abu Da'ud, kitab al-adab*, no. 4992, related on the authority of Abu Hurayra.

⁸⁰ AFGP-2002-003472, p. 6.

⁸¹ AFGP-2002-801138, p. 199, question 7.

⁸² AFGP-2002-801138, pp. 197, 199 and 200. In the same set of questions, one person asks, "Why did some people speak against Shaykh Usama bin Ladin when he was in Sudan, while now they fully support him?"

⁸³ Internal division over this issue dates back to at least 1993, when, according to court testimony from Jamal al-Fadl, a number of members of al-Qa'ida broke from the organization when Bin Ladin proposed bombing the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia in retaliation for arresting the "Blind Sheikh" 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman (Tom Hayes, "Terror chief's followers quit over plans to kill civilians, court told," *Associated Press*, February 21, 2001).

⁸⁴ Fazul, letter to "Brother Sharif," dated 7 August 1997, online at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/upclose/computer.html>. For an in-depth profile of Fazul, see the Combating Terrorism Center, *al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, Appendix B 1, available online at: <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/Fazul.pdf>.

risk getting the Arab jihadis kicked out of Afghanistan, which would play directly into the hands of their enemies. At one point the email addresses the al-Qa'ida leader as though he were a disobedient child:

The strangest thing I have heard so far is Abu Abdullah's saying that he wouldn't listen to the Leader of the Faithful when he asked him to stop giving interviews.... I think our brother [Bin Ladin] has caught the disease of screens, flashes, fans, and applause.... Abu Abdullah should go to the Leader of the Faithful with some of his brothers and tell them that ... the Leader of the Faithful was right when he asked you to refrain from interviews, announcements, and media encounters, and that you will help the Taliban as much as you can in their battle, until they achieve control over Afghanistan.... You should apologize for any inconvenience or pressure you have caused ... and commit to the wishes and orders of the Leader of the Faithful on matters that concern his circumstances here....⁸⁵

Similar opposition to Bin Ladin's activities is manifest in the questions submitted to the al-Qa'ida leadership by trainees in 2000. In a question submitted to Usama bin Ladin at an unidentified camp in mid-June of 2000, one trainee asked, "Has the al-Qa'ida Organization under your leadership made a pledge of allegiance (*mubaya'a*) to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan [sc., Mullah 'Umar's Taliban], and if so, how is that you raise the call to fight America, knowing that the Taliban wouldn't hear of such a thing, for reasons of the safety and security of Afghanistan (may God protect the Taliban)?"⁸⁶ In a similar set of questions presented to Abu'l-Walid at the close of a "political course" of training he had led in February of 2001, there were more questions about this than any other issue. Two people asked whether he expected Mullah 'Umar to expel Bin Ladin, and if so what would become of him; another handful presented anxious questions about the likelihood of a U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and what the possible results would be for the Arab jihadis.⁸⁷ On the basis of these questions, Abu'l-Walid submitted a number of items for clarification, apparently to Bin Ladin personally. He points out that there is confusion about loyalties, some people having understood that pledging their allegiance to Mullah 'Umar meant that they renounced activities against the United States; in a separate item he asks whether Bin Ladin's policy of giving trainees the option of working

⁸⁵ Email dated July 19, 1999, found on al-Qa'ida computer purchased by the Wall Street Journal in 2001 and published in Cullison, "Inside Al-Qaeda's Hard Drive." See also Alan Cullison and Andrew Higgins, "Strained Alliance: Al Qaeda's Sour Days in Afghanistan," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 2, 2002.

Though he ultimately joined its Shura Council, conflict between Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and the al-Qa'ida leadership is a recurring theme in the Harmony documents; in a letter dated 7 March 1999 al-Suri complains of mistreatment at the hands of members of al-Qa'ida and of his seeking to "open a new chapter of brotherhood and cooperation" with Usama bin Ladin and Abu Hafs (AFGP-2002-001111, pp. 5f.).

⁸⁶ AFGP-2002-801138, p. 170, question 35. This same document reveals that camp recruits had at least some knowledge of al-Qa'ida's plots to directly attack the United States; in one remarkable question (question 8, AFGP-2002-801138-007-0182), the trainee asks, "We have heard about the Oklahoma bombing and that it was the largest [ever] bomb attack in America. Was this bombing the one which was planned/organized by (*dabbarahu*) Ramzi Yousef?" The question is circled and marked with two Xs and four exclamation marks.

⁸⁷ AFGP-2002-801138, 'The Political Course Questions.'

either with al-Qa’ida or the Taliban had changed, since “some of the brothers say that they only pledged allegiance to you and the fight against the Jewish-Crusader alliance.”⁸⁸

As the time of the strikes neared, sustained opposition to the attacks of 9/11 was mounted at the highest levels of the al-Qa’ida leadership. A minority “hawkish” wing dominated by Abu Hafs al-Misri pushed for going forward and for attempting to gather weapons of mass destruction for use in any American response against Afghanistan.⁸⁹ According to testimony given by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed after the latter’s capture, however, a majority of the members of al-Qa’ida’s Shura Council opposed a direct attack on both ideological and strategic grounds.⁹⁰ This group included Abu’l-Walid, Saif al-Adel,⁹¹ Abu Hafs al-Muritani and Mustafa Abu’l-Yazid (aka Shaykh Sa’id al-Misri). Although their opposition to the attacks turned out to be fruitless, they all appear to have broken with the “hawkish” leaders of al-Qa’ida in the wake of the American military response to the attacks of 9/11, as the two groups fled in separate directions. Usama bin Ladin, Ayman al-Zawahiri and the rest of the “hawkish” leadership – with the exception of Abu Hafs al-Misri, who was killed by an American air strike near Kabul in November 2001 – fled into the mountainous border regions of eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan, while the opposition group from al-Qa’ida’s senior leadership fled south to Iran, where it is believed at least three of the above-named leaders are currently under house arrest.⁹²

2001-2006: Dispersal, Reconsolidation and Problems in Iraq

While the attacks of 9/11 made al-Qa’ida a household word, it also made the al-Qa’ida leadership the most hunted men in the world, many of whom have been captured or killed in the years since. The dispersal from its stronghold in Afghanistan seriously degraded

⁸⁸ AFGP-2002-801138, p. 217 (the pages are often out of order throughout this document).

⁸⁹ On this “hawkish” wing and its pursuit of WMDs, see the memoir by Abu’l-Walid that was serially published in seven issues of al-Sharq al-Awsat in December of 2004 under the title “Qissatu’l-afghan al-‘arab min al-dakhul ila afghanistan ila’l-khuruj ma’ a taliban” (“The Story of the Afghan Arabs from the Time of Arrival in Afghanistan until their Departure with the Taliban”), and Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, pp. 192ff.

⁹⁰ Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, p. 19. See also the *9/11 Commission Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 2004), pp. 250ff. The opposition wasn’t limited to those inside al-Qa’ida or the Taliban. A former leader of the jihadi organization known as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group revealed that in 2000 a meeting was held in Kandahar with representatives of different jihadi groups to discuss al-Qa’ida’s anti-American operations; the Libyans refused to endorse them and urged the al-Qa’ida leadership to pledge that it would cease provoking the U.S. (“Libyan Islamist Group Says Jihadist Groups Should Admit Failure of ‘Strategic Goals’,” *Al-Hayah*, OSC trans. GMP20061201825003).

⁹¹ On whom see the profile in *al-Qa’ida’s (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, online here: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/Saif.pdf>. By this time Saif al-Adel had married Abu’l-Walid’s eldest daughter (while in the opposing camp Abu Hafs had given one his daughters in marriage to a son Bin Ladin).

⁹² On Saif and Abu’l-Walid’s detention in Iran, see the Saif al-Adel profile in *al-Qa’ida’s (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, pp. 124f.; on Abu Hafs al-Muritani’s presence there, see Peter Finn, “Al Qaeda Deputies Harbored by Iran,” *The Washington Post*, August 28, 2002. Various sources have reported on Mustafa Abu’l-Yazid’s post-9/11 presence in Iran (see, e.g., “Al-Qa’ida’s Closer Ties with Pasdarans,” *Intelligence Online*, July 19, 2007), though on May 29 of 2007 a video released by al-Qa’ida stated that Mustafa Abu’l-Yazid had been appointed the leader of al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan, indicating that at least some reconciliation with al-Qa’ida Central had occurred.

the capacities of the central leadership to carry out further operations, and, aside from supporting the Taliban forces still fighting in Afghanistan, al-Qa’ida Central has largely been reduced to efforts at managing the al-Qa’ida “brand.” The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, however, opened up new opportunities for would-be jihadis, and various groups there and elsewhere in the world have continued to attack the United States and its allies under the banner of al-Qa’ida, often with only the most tenuous of connections to al-Qa’ida Central or the original leadership. A number of documents from the Harmony database shed light on leadership quarrels that have arisen in response to these latest developments.

As mentioned above, the 9/11 attacks on the United States led to a fundamental split between two leadership factions within al-Qa’ida. The leadership group that opposed the attacks, even as it was forced to flee to Iran, did not remain silent over its grievances. In one particularly blunt letter, dated 13 June 2002 and addressed by Saif al-Adel to a certain Mukhtar, the former writes bitterly of Usama bin Ladin’s precipitous folly having plunged al-Qa’ida “from misfortune to disaster.”⁹³ Echoing a view often expressed in the writings of Abu’l-Walid, Saif al-Adel complains of Bin Ladin’s autocratic leadership of the organization, whereby “if someone opposes him, he immediately puts forward another person to render an opinion in his support, clinging to his opinion.” The incompetent leadership, writes Saif, “every time it falters, gets up again and rushes headlong with no understanding or awareness.” In an apparent attempt to wrest some control over al-Qa’ida from Bin Ladin’s disastrous leadership, Saif urges his addressee to “stop all foreign actions, stop sending people to captivity, and stop devising new operations, regardless of whether or not orders come from Abu ‘Abdullah.” He also indicates that he intends to write to Bin Ladin as well, “so that he will stop his onrush in external actions, will discuss the matter appropriately and then start things over against the enemies of God.”⁹⁴ As far as Abu’l-Walid was concerned, as he wrote in a number of critical writings that have been published in the Arabic-language press since 2001, the whole enterprise of al-Qa’ida turned out to be a colossal failure; “It was a tragic example of an Islamic movement managed in an alarmingly meaningless way.”⁹⁵

The most recent leadership schism reflected in the Harmony documents is that which developed between al-Qa’ida Central and Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, who pledged allegiance to al-Qa’ida and agreed to fight in Iraq under its banner in late 2004. Friction between him and the al-Qa’ida leadership dated from the beginning of their relationship. When Usama bin Ladin invited Zarqawi to join al-Qa’ida in 2000, the latter refused on the grounds that he could not support Bin Ladin’s jihad against the United States.⁹⁶ Saif

⁹³ “Al Adl Letter,” available online at: http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/Al%20Adl%20Letter_Original.pdf.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Saif also recommended that particular people be put in charge of different aspects of the organization – that administrative responsibilities be transferred to him, that Abu’l-Faraj al-Libi be given command of al-Qa’ida in Pakistan and southern Afghanistan, and that ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi be put in charge in northern Afghanistan. Obviously, Bin Ladin and Zawahiri were able to make it to safety and resume control, but al-Libi was eventually given a senior position in Pakistan (until his capture in May of 2005), and al-Iraqi was given leadership roles in Afghanistan and subsequently Iraq (until his capture in late 2006).

⁹⁵ Abu’l-Walid, “The Story of the Afghan Arabs from the Time of the Arrival in Afghanistan until their Departure with the Taliban,” part 1, *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 8, 2004.

⁹⁶ Loretta Napoleoni, *Insurgent Iraq*, p. 95. The particulars of his objection to targeting the U.S. at that time are not given. Some sources also indicate that Zarqawi’s refusal to offer the pledge (*bay’ā*) to Bin Ladin was because the latter forbade him from teaching the works of his mentor, Abu Muhammad al-

al-Adel, who later wrote that Zarqawi was “a hardliner when it came to disagreements with other groups,”⁹⁷ brokered an arrangement whereby al-Qa’ida provided material support for Zarqawi to set up a training camp in Herat, Afghanistan, though at this time Zarqawi remained formally independent from Bin Ladin. After the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in October of 2001, the Northern Alliance destroyed Zarqawi’s camp, though he escaped to Kandahar, and eventually to Iran, from whence he entered Iraq.⁹⁸ Emerging soon after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq as an important Sunni jihadi leader, he was eventually convinced to make the pledge to Bin Ladin and change the name of his group to al-Qa’ida in the Land of the Two Rivers. He was not, however, willing to play by al-Qa’ida’s rules.

In “Zawahiri’s Letter to Zarqawi,” a document captured in Iraq and released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in October of 2005,⁹⁹ there is unmistakable evidence of the significant differences in strategic thinking and priorities that existed between al-Qa’ida Central and Zarqawi’s al-Qa’ida in Iraq. Though Zawahiri’s tone is warm, he lays out a frank assessment of the various ways in which Zarqawi appeared to be alienating the Iraqi populace and the broader Muslim community. He warns of repeating the mistake that al-Qa’ida made in allying with the Taliban, who were not representative of the Afghan people and met outright opposition from many segments of Afghani society, and urges Zarqawi to broaden his links to “all leaders of opinion and influence in the Iraqi arena.”¹⁰⁰ He criticizes Zarqawi for making disparaging statements about Iraqi religious leaders, again highlighting how this works at cross purposes with the need to garner popular support. While stopping short of opposing it, Zawahiri raises questions about the possible negative consequences of Zarqawi’s attacks on the Shi’a and incitement of a Sunni-Shi’a sectarian war.¹⁰¹ Zawahiri reserves his most pointed criticism for Zarqawi’s practice of beheading captives and posting videos of these murders on the Internet. Observing that “more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media,” Zawahiri urges him to desist from the repugnant practice which was clearly losing the hearts and minds of the Muslim world.¹⁰²

While the authenticity of this letter was debated in the Western press and at one point denied by Zarqawi himself, a subsequent communication to Zarqawi from al-Qa’ida Central discovered after Zarqawi was killed in June of 2006 confirmed that it was

Maqdisi, to al-Qa’ida trainees (see Mashari al-Zayidi, “Jordanian Papers on Fundamentalism and Politics,” part 4, *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 13, 2005, OSC trans. GMP20051013711005).

⁹⁷ “Detained Al-Qa’ida Leader Sayf al-Adl Chronicles Al-Zarqawi’s Rise in Organization,” *al-Quds al-‘Arabi*, May 21-22, 2005, FBIS trans. GMP20050606637100.

⁹⁸ On Zarqawi’s roundabout escape route from Herat to Iraq, see Napoleoni, *Insurgent Iraq*, pp. 104f.

⁹⁹ See http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20051011_release.htm.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/CTC-Zawahiri-Letter-10-05.pdf>, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 8-9. Zarqawi had clearly communicated his position on waging open war against the Shi’a the year before, in a letter released by the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004, available online here:

http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040212_zarqawi_full.html. Zarqawi’s war on the Shi’a was one of the main points of contention in the denunciatory letters and interviews given by his former mentor and leading jihadi ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Muhammad al-Najjar, “The Estrangement Between al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi,” *Amman al-Sabil*, July 19, 2005, OCS trans. GMP20050719547001).

¹⁰² <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/CTC-Zawahiri-Letter-10-05.pdf>, p. 10.

genuine and showed an expansion of the leadership's criticisms of Zarqawi's tactics.¹⁰³ Written by a senior al-Qa'ida leader using only the name 'Atiyah, the letter reiterates many of Zawahiri's earlier criticisms and advice, though in a significantly more forceful tone.¹⁰⁴ Emphasizing that Zarqawi has attained an international prominence and influence through his leadership in Iraq, 'Atiyah focuses on Zarqawi's unrestrained violence and failure to understand how it is alienating the Muslim public. He chides Zarqawi for not seeking or obeying guidance from al-Qa'ida Central, warning him that military action that does not conform to an over-arching policy will accomplish nothing.¹⁰⁵ He orders him to consult with the al-Qa'ida leadership before proceeding, instructing Zarqawi to send a representative to Waziristan, and consult with Iraqi Sunni leaders as well. 'Atiyah also cautions Zarqawi against letting a fawning inner circle cloud his judgment or blind him to the fact that he has made grave mistakes and must be "taken to task" for "tyranny and oppression upon the people," committing "corruption within the land" and alienating the people from al-Qa'ida, jihad and even Islam.¹⁰⁶

The criticisms leveled at Zarqawi by al-Qa'ida Central clearly have less to do with military strategy and more to do with global brand management. To the millions of Muslims still forming an opinion of al-Qa'ida's goals and ideology, it simply does not look good when jihadis waving the al-Qa'ida banner systematically and enthusiastically kill other Muslims, especially civilians. While attempting to mire the Coalition forces in a sectarian conflict that threatens the stability of the whole region may have been a useful military tactic in Zarqawi's mind, it represented one of the greatest threats to the health of the al-Qa'ida brand.

Conclusion

The picture of internal strife that emerges from the Harmony documents highlights not only al-Qa'ida's past failures, but also—and more importantly—it offers insight into its present weaknesses. Al-Qa'ida is beset today by challenges that surfaced in leadership disputes at the beginning of the organization's history, and it will likely continue to struggle with these issues so long as it survives. In the earliest phase of its development, long before it had formulated a coherent ideological platform, al-Qa'ida's supreme leader

¹⁰³ A summary of the arguments made against the authenticity of the Zawahiri letter can be seen in the sidebar of this site: http://www.iraqfact.com/Zawahiri_letter_to_Zarqawi.html. The second letter was discovered during a search of the safehouse in which Zarqawi was killed and was made public in September of 2006 by the Iraqi National Security Advisor, Muwaffaq al-Rabi'i. At page 8, the author refers to "the Doctor's [Zawahiri's] message that the Americans published. It is a genuine letter and it represents the thoughts of the brothers, the shaykhs, and all of the intellectual and moral leadership here [in Waziristan]."

¹⁰⁴ The precise identity of the author is not known (though some analysts have identified him with the Libyan jihadi 'Atiyah 'Abd al-Rahman), but from his reference to Zarqawi having visited him from Herat, we know that the author's relationship to Zarqawi dates to at least 1999 or early 2000.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/CTC-AtiyahLetter.pdf>, p. 5. This strikingly echoes the repeated criticisms of the pre-9/11 al-Qa'ida leadership made by Abu'l-Walid, discussed above.

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/CTC-AtiyahLetter.pdf>, p. 14. As noted by Washington Post reporter Karen DeYoung, the letter "seemed to produce at least temporary results," but was followed two months later by the attack on a Shi'i shrine in Samarra by "Zarqawi-affiliated forces," an attack that led to a major expansion of sectarian violence in Iraq. "Letter Gives Glimpse of al-Qaeda's Leadership", *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2006.

proved himself utterly inept as a military commander. Usama bin Ladin's initial efforts to fashion al-Qa'ida into an all-Arab guerrilla army were farcical at best, and a source of astonished frustration to the more capable strategists in his orbit. Even when it had a clearly defined objective – to defeat the communists in Afghanistan – al-Qa'ida's leadership was unable to muster the organizational competency to function adequately in even a supporting role, much less a direct or leading one. In the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal, the leaders of al-Qa'ida were further shackled by disunity over immediate and long-term goals, and in their chauvinistic conviction that jihad was properly an Arab affair Bin Ladin and his senior deputies led the organization into a Sudanese morass, squandering al-Qa'ida's resources and further demonstrating the extent of its systemic failings and strategic miscalculations. Upon its forced return to Afghanistan, al-Qa'ida found refuge and a potential ideological partner in the Taliban, a group that was (successfully) pursuing the same goal of reestablishing an Islamic Caliphate, but narrow extremism and outright bigotry led to further al-Qa'ida in-fighting over the Taliban alliance. The al-Qa'ida brand took its decisive shape during this period, but by placing the call for war with the United States at the center of that brand, Bin Ladin and the hawkish faction among his senior deputies introduced an even greater fissure into their organization and critically damaged its relationship with its sole protector, the Taliban. Its successful attacks on America, first on the embassies in Africa and then on 9/11, gave al-Qa'ida's message an immediate global audience, but the American military response to these attacks have so seriously degraded its organizational capacities that management of that message has been virtually all that al-Qa'ida Central has subsequently been able to muster.

There has recently been some speculation that al-Qa'ida has been regrouping in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, perhaps even regaining the organizational capacity to operationally manage terrorist agents, but there is no evidence to suggest that it has overcome the persistent weaknesses identified in this report.¹⁰⁷ On the contrary, recent events have highlighted al-Qa'ida's continuing vulnerability to them. For example, in 2005, after the capture in Pakistan of senior al-Qa'ida operative Abu Faraj al-Libi, it was revealed that Central Asian jihadis, a contingent of whom have established a foothold in the Waziristan tribal areas, provided the information to Pakistani intelligence that led them to al-Libi. Bad blood generated by the chauvinistic disdain for Central Asian jihadis displayed by Arab al-Qa'ida personnel in the region had led captured Uzbek, Tajik and Chechen jihadis to provide information on al-Qa'ida's operations, leading to a series of raids and arrests that ultimately led to al-Libi's capture.¹⁰⁸

Despite the continued appeal of al-Qa'ida's message to certain populations, it must not be forgotten that al-Qa'ida's transition from an extremist cult cloistered in the mountains of South Asia to a publicly-debated global movement creates new sets of vulnerabilities, open to exploitation by any interested party with the means of delivering its message. Lacking a broad command-and-control structure, al-Qa'ida Central finds

¹⁰⁷ On the possibility of al-Qa'ida having regrouped in the Tribal Areas see Craig Whitlock, "The New Al-Qaeda Central," *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2007, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/08/AR2007090801845.html>.

¹⁰⁸ "Ethnic Rifts Tearing at al-Qaida, May Have Led to al-Libbi Capture," *The Associated Press*, May 11, 2005.

itself unable to control the uses – and abuses – of its brand by self-starting “affiliate” groups. The gory media tactics of Zarqawi’s al-Qa’ida in Iraq did considerable damage to the mass popularity of the al-Qa’ida message.¹⁰⁹ Letters from al-Qa’ida Central to Zarqawi attempted damage control while he was alive, and in a recent video appearance, Usama bin Ladin himself has tried to shore up his brand against the effects of Zarqawi’s legacy through direct media spin control. For example, he laid blame for the Sunni-Shi`a civil war on the United States, even though he was certainly aware of Zarqawi’s role in igniting the bloody sectarian conflict in Iraq, as is abundantly clear in the letters from Zawahiri and ‘Atiyah discussed above.¹¹⁰ The damage to the al-Qa’ida name wrought by Zarqawi’s tactics was seen as so bad by his former associates in Iraq that they, supported by al-Qa’ida Central, changed the name of their organization from al-Qa’ida in Iraq to the Islamic State of Iraq, hoping by this move to regain traction with Sunni insurgents alienated by assassinations of Sunni leaders carried out in al-Qa’ida’s name; thus far they have failed.¹¹¹

The continuing failure of the Islamic State of Iraq is emblematic of a larger theme of this report: al-Qa`ida is terrible at state building. As long as Bin Ladin and Zawahiri are at the helm, their inability to organize will dash any hopes they have for creating an Islamist state. And judging from the documentary evidence, it does not seem that state building is more than a slogan in their eyes. Rather, they rely on local grievances and instability to market their brand worldwide.

Bin Ladin and Zawahiri are the incarnation of the al-Qa`ida brand and as long as they are able to broadcast new images of themselves their brand will continue to grow. At the very least, their media distribution must be degraded; at most, they must be eliminated or captured. It is true that capture or death will not stop other jihadis from venerating Bin Ladin and Zawahiri or continuing to fight, but neither will it be insignificant. On the contrary, it will, over time, greatly reduce the appeal of al-Qa`ida as an emblem, which will ultimately reduce the appeal of the ideology they espouse.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

¹⁰⁹ A Pew Global Attitudes Project report on Islamic Extremism released in the summer of 2005 found that “While support for suicide bombings and other terrorist acts has fallen in most Muslim-majority nations surveyed, so too has confidence in Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.” *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics*, released July 14, 2005, online at:

<http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=248>. This report relied on polling data taken several months before the coordinated hotel bombings in Amman, Jordan, orchestrated by Zarqawi. The responses to those attacks by the Jordanian public included what were perhaps the first mass demonstrations against al-Qa’ida in the Muslim world.

¹¹⁰ “The Solution,” video message released by al-Qa’ida’s media arm on 7 September 2007; Bin Ladin blames the U.S. for the sectarian war on p. 2 of the transcript, available online at <http://abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/transcript2.pdf>.

¹¹¹ See the report by Brian Fishman, “The Imaginary Emir: Al-Qa’ida in Iraq’s Strategic Mistake,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 18 July 2007, available online at <http://ctc.usma.edu/pdf/ISI-al-baghdadi%20fictitious2.pdf>.

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Date: 2 April 1994 to 7 May 1998

Author: Osama Bin Laden "The Committee for Advice and Reform"

Length: 103 pages

Title: Letters from bin Laden: A Collection of letters from Osama Bin Laden to various persons in Saudi Arabia Statements 7 -21

Notes: Skipped pages indicate repetition of a communiqué

The translations omit specific Sura and Hadith, as well as the names of scholarly sources that were mentioned in the original Arabic texts.

References: Imam Malik, Imam Ahmad, Ibn Taymiyah, Al-'Izz Ibn 'Abd-al-Salam

Synopsis: The following letters were written between 1994 and 1998, and cover a range of topics related to Saudi Arabia. The primary theme is the illegitimacy of the Saudi regime, and the allegation that they are supporting a Western plot to destroy the Muslim nation. Each letter addresses a current event, describing the event and providing the author's analysis of the context and implications of the regime's actions. Most statements end with a call to action on the part of the regime, the scholars, or the citizens of Saudi Arabia. The statements are coherently written and well-organized, and they are designed to motivate support through appeals to Muslim's better nature. Bin Laden's writing demonstrates an ability to communicate with multiple audiences, appealing to each group's pride and specific capabilities

Statement 7 (sic), pp. 001-003: Our invitation to Give Advice and Reform

To: King Fahd Bin 'Abd-al 'Aziz Al-Saud and the people of Saudi Arabian Peninsula

02-11-1414 (12 April 1994)

King Fahd has asked Osama Bin Laden to return to the country, however this is unlikely as Osama Bin Laden's money was frozen and his passport confiscated. Religious scholars have previously asked King Fahd to cease actions against God's law but he has not done so. A petition signed by 400 people was sent in 1411 (during the Gulf War), and another in 1413. The people's rights have been abrogated and corruption infests government agencies. The country's monetary and economic situation is worsening, taxes have been raised yet the government wastes money. The armed forces are in poor condition, and shari'a law has been suspended. Foreign policy works against the interests of Muslims in Gaza, Jericho, and Algeria while supporting infidels. Attempts to promote reform have triggered reprisals and the "waging of war against just people who are hunted at home and abroad." To fulfill advisory promises, "we would like to announce the arrival of our brothers and scholars into the country." Osama Bin Laden urges King Fahd to abide by the requests of the Committee. End quote: God will not change people unless they do so for themselves.

Statement 3, p. 007: Saudi Arabia Supports the Communists in Yemen

27-12-1414 (07 June 1994)

The Yemeni communists have enslaved the Yemeni people, spreading apostasy and corruption. Infidel forces and their agents in the region led a conspiracy to re-establish two Yemeni states to promote conflict between them, Prince Sultan led a special committee that funneled support to the Yemeni Socialist Party. King Fahd is known to have anti-Islamic policies such as opposing Islamic awakening that would expose the artificiality of his rule; supporting anti-Islamic regimes such as the USSR, Algeria, Syria, and Christian groups in Sudan. Furthermore, he supported United Nations resolutions that cost Muslim lives in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, and Kashmir, and which support the Jews in Palestine, Muslims now realize that the U.N. is an instrument in the hands of the Jews and Crusaders, Such behavior encourages divisions in the umma, leads to dispersal of wealth away from the Arabian Peninsula, supports socialists and communists who oppress the Yemeni people, is likely to provoke punishment from God, and allows for foreign intervention in the region. The letter ends with a call to the ulema to declare that these policies are dangerous and evil.

Statement 4, pp. 009-010: The Banishment of Communism from the Arabian Peninsula: The Episode and the Proof.

12-2-1415 (11 July 1994)

Jihad operations had been successful in eliminating socialist camps in Yemen, which is a lesson proving that all those who oppose the faith of the amah will fail. The Saudi regime, particularly Prince Sultan, supported the communist factions with money and weapons, which is a form of apostasy given that communists are atheists. Western powers were too smart to back the losing side, showing that Western powers will not "take the risk of intervening in order to protect or assist corrupt regimes that do not have the support or endorsement of their people." The defeat of the communists is a rejection of secular and atheist regimes across the region.

Statement 5, pp. 013-014: Quran Scholars in the Face of Despotism

11-2-1415 (19 July 1994)

Osama Bin Laden praises scholars who have bravely unveiled the truth about the Saudi government. The government has used witchcraft and the media to justify its stands against Islam, while supporting the unbelievers. Scholars have raised the head of the ummah high to face the despotism and injustices of the regime. In turn, the government has slandered these scholars, taking away their freedom and trampling their rights.

Statement 6, pp. 017-018: Saudi Arabia Unveils its War Against Islam and its Scholars

08-04-1415 (12 September 1994)

In accordance with instructions from the United States, Saudi intelligence agents are arresting prominent anti-government scholars and preachers, including Salman Al-'Awdah and Safar al-Hawali. Prince Bandar also publicly acknowledged a relationship with the Zionist entity. This confirms that the Saudi government is in a war against Islam and is no different from secular

governments. The government has been unable to deal with criticism, and indicates that the King and his "gang" obey the mercenary intelligence agents of foreign governments, Christians, and Zionists, Osama Bin Laden calls for righteous scholars to be patient and steadfast, for Muslim people to stay committed and not be confused by government deception, for silent scholars to take a stand, for Muslims in government to remember that they are accomplices unless they act against the regime, and to the government to be advised that they are at war with God.

Statement 7, pp. 21-22: Urgent Letter to Security Officials

11-04-1415 (16 September 1994)

Security officers are reminded that they were trained to defend the interests of their people and to act as their representatives. They must be vigilant guardians, but the government has attempted to take this "great and honorable position" away from them and turn them against Islam by forcing them to participate in the arrest and detention of scholars. He lists crimes of the Saudi government before calling on the security services to refuse to arrest any more scholars. He reminds them that God will bear witness to the punishment of those who stand by a tyrant, and reminds them that "every Muslim's blood, wealth, and food are forbidden to other Muslims." To show other Muslims that they are slaves of God alone, they should repent evil, refuse to obey orders to commit aggression against ulema, urge others not to obey such orders, help the people remove tyranny, not trust the regime, and strive to have the arrested scholars released.

Statement 8, pp. 25-26: Important Telegram to Our Brothers in the Armed Forces

14-4-1415 (19 September 1994)

The Saudi government has exposed its hostility to Islam by arresting the best of the ulema. The regime also imported Christian women to defend it, thereby placing the army in the highest degree of shame, disgrace, and frustration. It allowed American army bases in the peninsula, supported communists in Yemen, and has not helped defeat the IDF. Prince Sultan received five billion dollars' worth of commissions on arms sales in one year at the same time that allowances and reimbursements for soldiers were stopped. He argues that the regime has lost its legitimacy as a result of its friendliness with enemies of Islam and because of its hostility to the feelings of the people in a time of need. He predicts that it's only a matter of time until the regime falls. He reminds the "extraordinary men" that they are guardians of the faith, and reminds them that "if a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is hell, to abide therein forever and wrath and curse of God are upon him," (Quran 4:93) and that "the most desppicable to God is he who kills a Muslim man" (Hadith).

Statement 9, pp. 29: Do Not Have Vile Actions in Your Religion

11-04-1415 (16 September 1994)

Muslim youth are called to action. The time of listlessness and relaxation is over. The Saudi government committed a fatal mistake in arresting scholars, as this shows that they are enemies of Islam. This not a trial but a blessing, as it reveals the truth about the battle between the regime and

the people and their ulema, The people, who are “exploding with anger” are urged to renew their pledge to God by giving as much as they can (to zakat), to be disciplined and avoid taking actions that will harm the interests of the whole, to reveal the reality of the struggle to everyone they know, and to continue to demand the release of the imprisoned scholars.

There is a genius way of writing as if his opinions are already accepted and as if it should all be intuitive.

Statement 10, pp. 31-32: Higher Committee for Harm!!

10-05-1415 (15 October 1994)

After conducting an “insane campaign” against the ulema and scholars in Saudi Arabia, the regime created the Higher Committee for Islamic Affairs. This entity is an attempt to polish the regime’s image by deceiving the people into believing that its purpose is to promote da’wah. Prince Sultan (Minister of Defense) and Prince Naif (Minister of Interior) are head of the council, which “leaves no room for doubt” about its intentions: “the destruction of true Islam and its da’wah, support for the religion of the king, and preparation for the history of the two black men filled with a malice for Islam.” The duties and powers of the council are not defined, showing the arrogance of the regime.

The creation of this committee shows that the regime is not ready to listen to the good council of Sheikh ‘Adb-al ‘Aziz Bin Baz, who had tried to encourage reform. The committee has punished Sheikh Bin Baz by absorbing his powers. The strange thing is that the regime is able to find ulema that are still willing to back it.

Statement 11, pp. 35-38: Open Letter for Sheikh Bin Baz

27-07-1415 (29 December 1994)

Begins with praise and greetings, and a Hadith: “The best jihad is the word of truth in the presence of the unjust sultan.” The ulema are heirs to the prophets and represent the good example and ideal model for the umma. The true ulema resist tyranny and speak the truth. Osama Bin Laden reminds the Sheikh of his great responsibility, and wonders at his silence during a time of liars and evil. Osama Bin Laden lists examples where the ulema have acted in error, about which Sheikh Bin Baz has not corrected the error.

1. Corruption has spread, and ulema have been complicit in sanctioning usury (charging interest for bank loans, which is considered haram by some Muslims). Osama Bin Laden states that the Sheikh has deceived the people by not making a distinction “between rulers who merely tolerate usury and rulers who legitimize and legalize usury.” Those who legitimize usury are apostates and infidels, but Bin Baz continues to praise the regime. The current economic struggles are a punishment from God for allowing usury.

2. King Fahd wore a cross, and Bin Baz justified this action, although it is clearly apostasy. The king’s poor health is clear indication that this was infidelity.

3. Bin Baz issued a fatwa permitting the Crusader-Jewish alliance that occupied the country in the name of liberating Kuwait. This was an abominable action that insulted the honor of the umma, sullied its dignity, and defiled the holy places.

4. Bin Baz kept silent when the Saudi regime aided the communists in Yemen, considering them to be fellow Muslims. Osama Bin Laden writes, "When were the communists ever Muslims? Aren't you the one who previously issued a fatwa on their apostasy and the necessity of killing them in Afghanistan? Or is there a difference between Yemeni communists and Afghan communists?"

5. Bin Baz wrote a fatwa allowing the "attacks and maltreatment" of the ulema that resulted in the arrest and detention of Salman al-'Awdah and Safar al-Hawali.

More recently, Bin Baz supplied a fatwa sanctioning peace and normalization with the Jews, something that is painful for Muslims as it gives a veneer of legitimacy to the "surrender documents that the treacherous and cowardly Arab tyrants signed," opening Jerusalem to occupation.

Per Osama Bin Laden, the present Jewish enemy is "not dwelling in his original country," and therefore peace is not allowed (as it is with one who is warred on from outside). Jews have usurped sacred Muslim land, and they are an "attacking enemy" that corrupts religion. [The formulation that Jews are outside their original country allows any kind of warfare upon them.] Ibn Taymiyah is quoted as follows: The attacking enemy who corrupts the religion and the world must, in keeping with the faith, be repelled. There are no (limiting) conditions." Therefore, it is religiously required to defend Palestinian people and the "stone-throwing heroes."

Osama Bin Laden goes on to argue that even if it were permissible to make peace with the Jews, the Arab leaders are illegitimate, and are therefore not allowed to make peace on behalf of the umma. Such apostate rulers have neither legitimacy nor sovereignty over Muslims. Bin Baz' fatwa gave legitimacy to secular organizations [the United Nations] and deceived the umma with its disgraceful summary and misleading generalization.

Osama Bin Laden suggests that the opinions of people who have experience in jihad are more legitimate than those who have no experience. Quoting Ibn Taymiyah, "Obligation is to be considered in matters of jihad according to the opinion of upright men of religion who have experience in what people of this world of, rather than those who mainly look at a matter from the viewpoint of religion. Do not adopt their opinion – not the opinion of men or religion that have no experience in the world." [This is another key formulation that gives Osama Bin Laden's opinion equal weight to that of religious scholars, and gives him the authority to challenge more learned men]. Whoever issued Bin Baz' fatwas has a "lack of awareness of the true nature of the situation." Osama Bin Laden closes with several paragraphs urging bin Baz to keep his distance from the tyrants and wrongdoers.

Statement 12, pp. 47-50: The Second Letter to Sheikh 'Abd al'Aziz Bin Baz

29 January 1995

Sheikh Bin Baz' latest fatwas have "scared Muslims in general, as well as freedom fighters, and weaker men/women and children of Palestine." These fatwas give religious legitimacy to Arab leaders' political treason in that it allowed reconciliation with the [Jewish] enemy. The Advice and Reform Foundation had expected Sheikh Bin Baz to take a stand against this, but instead he confirmed his earlier fatwas on the same subject.

The current situation in Palestine cannot be considered a truce, because only the enemy's terms have been met. Additionally, the deal was created by a group of apostate Arab leaders. The agreement, which establishes diplomatic representation and economic cooperation, effectively indicates Jews' "eternal ownership of the land – thus permanently calling off jihad" [Entering into treaty commitments legitimizes Israel's existence]. Secularism amounts to atheism, and so this agreement is based on "invalidity," therefore it is invalid itself.

"This fatwa's claim of Muslim's weakness and inability to fight Jews is invalid, because...subject experts did not issue it...It does not make sense [that] more than a billion Muslims who own the largest natural resources in the world are unable to defeat 5 million Jews in Palestine." The ailment is not the military or financial, but rather the leaders' betrayal and the scholar's acceptance of the current situation.

Osama Bin Laden calls for a return to fatwas issued by those who have knowledge of both religion and current affairs, urges Bin Baz to distance himself from the regime or resign his position.

Statement 13, pp. 51-52: Prince Salman and Ramadan Alms

12 February 1995

The Saudi regime has dissolved charitable organizations that used to deliver donations directly to needy people inside and outside the country. These independent organizations have been replaced by new institutions that are subservient to Prince Salman, who "has never been known to be interested and care for Muslim affairs." In the past, the Saudi regime used popular donations to influence Afghan freedom fighters to conform to Western policy goals. It also gave donations to Christian organizations in Bosnia, to Yemeni communists, to the communist Dostum (Rachid Dostum, an Afghani warlord), and the Al-Kata'ib party in Lebanon. The Saudi regime supported the Algerian regime as it suppressed Muslims, and also provided money to the Soviets to repress Muslims in Chechnya.

The timing of this initiative supports the U.S. presidents' decision to freeze the assets of groups that oppose the [Middle East] peace process. Osama Bin Laden draws the brother's attention to the danger of depositing monies into UD banks, as it may be frozen. Muslims are encouraged to avoid giving funds to the government agencies, but rather give them directly to the needy, or those "trusted individuals who will deliver them."

Statement 14, pp. 55-58: Saudi Arabia Continues Its War Against Islam and Its Scholars

09 March 1995

After Eid a- Fitr, a second group of clerics was detained, including Muhammad bin Sa'id al-Qahtani, Dr. Sa'id bin Zu'ayr (Zuhayr) and Dr. Bashar al-Bashar. This confirms the aggression of the Saudi regime against Islam and is evidently a "strategy planned by international infidel countries." These Sheikhs, like Salman al-'Awdah and Safar al-Hawali, have been imprisoned for speaking the truth, calling for the application of Islamic laws, and calling for reform of the media and administration. [Text goes on to list same grievances previously mentioned in preceding letters regarding usury, the state of the military, etc]. Reiterates the regimes hostility to Islam and these scholars personally, and reminds umma to be wary of fatwas issued on behalf of the regime's interests.

Osama Bin Laden notes that these most recent arrests came after NATO's "call to the countries of the region to cooperate in order to eliminate the danger that threatens its interests and desires for hegemony [referring to ?]. In fact, the Saudi regime has done Muslims a favor by revealing its true objective and providing proof to those who still think positively about the regime. He urges fair trials for the detainees, who are praised for their courage and reminded that this is a trial from Allah to differentiate the righteous from the others.

Statement 15, pp. 59-68: Scholars are the Prophet's Successors

16 May 1995

Scholars are the successors of the prophet and the defenders of religion. Because of their importance, it is important to distinguish between those working to further the word of Allah, and those who prefer earthly things and materials. Sura and Hadith emphasizing importance of scholars. Underestimating scholars, or talking negatively about their knowledge is "associated with danger," yet no one should be impressed with the knowledge of one who memorizes the Quran but doesn't follow its teachings. Bad scholars can be distinguished from good scholars in two ways: lack of acting on their knowledge, and changing what Allah said to interpret laws to their own benefit. "Disintegration of rulers is caused by scholar's dissolution, which is caused by love of money and material things," and standing up to bad scholars is a priority in defending Islam. Yet a majority of people believe that "obeying scholars had no limits" and this is a mistake, which is why religious laws warn against glorifying scholars. Quoting Sheikh Muhammad bin 'Abd-al Wahab in his book Al-Tawhid: those who obey scholars and rulers in forbidding that what Allah allows and vice versa, perceive them as gods. [Therefore, anyone who blindly follows any scholar in something contrary to Allah is an apostate.]

Several paragraphs about proper way to correct scholars follow, which show that a harsh response is legitimate when a scholar persists in a judgment or action after he is aware that he is "on the wrong side." Some exception is made for scholars who have good intentions but are taken advantage of by corrupt sultans. However, fatwas may not be issued by those who are not fully informed, and such fatwas are automatically null.

The requirements for a good scholar are listed. Scholars must be role models in knowledge and action, and must be sure of all the conditions of a fatwa. He must be aware of the possibility of being led into temptation, and have the courage to speak out. Salman al-'Awdah and Safar al-Hawali are examples of courageous scholars. Scholars must stay away from the "suspicious ways of rulers," and the Prophet is quoted as saying, "Whoever gets close to rulers will be infatuated, the

closer a person gets to a ruler, the farther he gets away from Allah." Scholars who abide by these guidelines deserve respect and honor.

Statement 16. p. 69: Prince Sultan and the Air Aviation Commission

13-2-1415 (11 July 1995)

The Saudi regime has abandoned the requirements of monotheism and witnessing (there is no God but God, and Mohammad is his messenger), and therefore has lost its legitimacy. The economy is in terrible condition, due in part to the accumulation of interest debt and the plundering of public wealth by the regime. These debts have led to privatization of state assets such as the Saudi airline. Clearly, the regime intends to get new money "from the hands of the people." Privatization will get rid of the debts of the airline, but only after it purchases 7.5 billion dollars for 60 new American-made planes, which are not needed. The French made a much better offer, but royal family members (particularly Prince Sultan) made the deal in order to please the Americans. This will provide 20,000 jobs to U.S. airline manufacturers, which will keep it operational for five years.

The private sector will probably be forced to buy the Saudi national airline at an unfair price, and will have to assume the accumulated debt. As a result, privatization will cost many people their jobs, and it is unclear who will then pay for the air travel of the royal family.

Statement 17, pp. 71-79, 89: An Open Message to King Fahd On the Occasion of the Latest Ministerial Shuffle

5-3-1415 (3 August 1995)

This letter is an attempt to "pierce the veil with which [the king] has surrounded [himself] so that [he] does not have to listen to the truth." Osama Bin Laden hopes to break through the wall that [the king] has built around [himself] "that stops the truth from getting to" him.

The king and his princes have deceived the people, and have tried to "absorb their anger through marginal and deceptive reforms," which were "nothing more than temporary sedatives for the people's anger." The Advisory council was "born dead" and the recent ministerial shuffle will have minimal impact. The king curbed the rights of the religious scholars, and desecrated the nation's holy places while plundering its wealth. He led the nation into an economic decline. The basis for these problems is that the king and the regime "strayed from the requisites of monotheism and its obligations."

Anyone who legislates human laws that are contrary to the laws of Allah is an infidel [Quranic citations apparently follow, but these were not included in the translation]. The Saudi regime is therefore practicing the arbitration of infidel laws, which are "positive" [can be developed and elaborated upon by people]. Trade councils and banking laws that allow interest in transactions are one example of such laws. A second example is the Gulf Cooperation Council, which lists as its legal basis the laws of the council itself, the principles of international law, the world conventions, and the principles of Islamic shari'a. Osama Bin Laden calls this mockery to the religion and

contempt to the shari'a, and continues, "You placed the scum of human positivist thoughts, the customs and traditions of the pre-Islamic epoch, and the laws of infidel judicial associations above the shari'a." Several Sheikhs are quoted to establish the authenticity of this argument.

On the subject of interest, Osama Bin Laden writes that, "the one that was aware that it was forbidden to accept interest and goes ahead and does it, he had committed one of the gravest sins, Allah protect us; however, the one who legislates the laws that allow interest is an infidel. The bank towers themselves rival the towers of the two holy mosques.

The true motive of the regime is to protect infidel interests. Although the regime sometimes supports Islamic causes, it never supports these causes when they conflict with Western interests. Somalia, Bosnia, and Palestine, "the mother of Islamic causes" are examples. He relates an incident in which President Clinton demanded that the king meet him at the American air base, not in Riyadh, as a humiliating example of American dominance, demonstrating that the kingdom is no more than an American protectorate subject to American laws.

The economic situation is dire. At the beginning of the king's reign, there was an estimated reserve of one hundred and forty billion dollars, with average daily oil revenue amounting to one hundred million dollars. In spite of this, the country is indebted by more than eighty percent of its national gross income, which makes it the most indebted nation in the world [?]. Average citizens suffer from high taxes and duties, and the rising cost of water, electricity, and food. Commodity prices are rising, and schools are suffering from over crowdedness. Hospitals are not being properly maintained or funded, and unemployment is rising. The government has urged people to conserve energy while the palaces are well lit, with the air conditioning running day and night. The king has built palaces all over the country, and in every major world capital and Western resort.

The causes of the crisis include falling oil prices, for which the king bears some responsibility as he allowed the oil reserves to be tapped in order to prevent price spikes. The king is subordinated to Western interests, as demonstrated by his decision to provide \$25 billion to Saddam Hussein to keep the price of oil down during the Iran-Iraq war in order to hurt Iran. The king has not attempted to find alternate sources of income, and spent sixty billion dollars to underwrite the cost of the Gulf war. After the war, the regime spent an additional forty billion dollars on American arms, and also purchased Tornado aircraft from the British.

The regime borrowed from local international banks with interest, and the king has "broken every statistical record in squandering" public funds. This puts him in a class with the Shah of Iran, Marcos of the Philippines, Ceausescu (SP?) of Romania.

The first economic crisis of Saudi Arabia was in 1964 and 1965, due to the mismanagement of King Sa'ud who was removed from the throne to resolve the crisis. There was a second crisis in 1986 due to collapse of oil prices.

On judgment day, Allah will not talk to an adulterous sheikh, a lying king, or an arrogant destitute (Hadith). The king has limited options, none of which will be politically popular. In a mocking tone, Osama Bin Laden asks the king if he will reduce the interest, devalue the riyal, raise taxes, or sell government properties (by which he means palace furnishings). Osama Bin Laden tells the king

that his "staying will be the cause of your extinction, and your continuing on will be the cause of your end."

The military situation: The army has traditionally consumed one third of the national budget, which is much more than other countries (France, for example, spends one percent). In spite of this spending, the army is just a lot of equipment with no human resources to use it. It has been used as a source of income by influential princes. Examples of unnecessary spending include the seventy F-15 aircraft purchased "to support George in his election campaign after the war." There was a deal to expand the telephone system for the sake of Clinton, who "lost because of your support to his competitor George Bush" (sic).

During the Gulf war the air force "did not perform anything worth mentioning" while the navy didn't fire a single shot. In order to prepare one brigade of armored cars, the army had to bring in technicians from Pakistan. This demonstrates the failure of Prince Sultan as Minister of Defense.

In 1992 the citizens of the Arabian Peninsula spent more money on defense than Germany, Italy, Egypt, Romania, Poland, Spain, Ecuador, Uruguay, Ireland, and the United States combined (sic). Much of the money has gone to commissions and bribes, as princes seize between forty and sixty percent of the value of every arms deal. Most of the balance of money has been spent on bases and facilities that are too large for the national army, and were built to serve the American and Western forces. Why are the Americans still on these bases? Is Iraq still an imminent threat? Saudi Arabia has been delivered into "a condition of chronic military crippling in [an] effort to tolerate the Crusader and Jewish forces that are defiling the holy places."

The king and the defense minister are to blame, not the "members of the Army or the Guard, whose goodness, gallantry, and bravery have been witnessed by many." The King has always been afraid of allowing coordination between the forces, yet coordination is essential for successful military operation.

Summary: The regime has "committed sins against Islam that negate its guardianship in the eyes of Allah." These sins include corruption, subordination to the infidels and their laws, and failure in the areas of defense, economics and economics. These failures demonstrate the king's inability to run the nation, "even if he had not sinned against Islam." There is a deep struggle between two ideologies: a godly system that is whole and places all matters in the hands of Allah versus the regime itself. The religious scholars, reformers, merchants and tribal sheikhs will all go against the regime. This will not be considered a prohibited abandonment of the rulers because the regime lacks legitimacy: "what does not exist legally, does not exist at all."

Osama Bin Laden urges the king to accept responsibility and resign.

Statement 18, pp. 91-92: The Bosnia Tragedy and the Deception of the Servant of the Two Mosques

15-3-1416 (11 August 1995)

The Saudi government closed charitable organizations that delivered contributions of benefactors to deserving recipients. These organizations have been replaced with associations that are supervised by members of the ruling family such as Prince Sultan and Prince Salman. This revealed a scheme to monopolize charitable contributions to prevent Islam and Muslims from reaping any benefit. It has been used to pressure mujahideen and influence their policies. These "scandals" have become public, but the regime ignores the growing level of awareness about this situation. The government's involvement is merely a show of support to "raise the value of its declining political stock."

By way of example, money donated to the Palestinian cause (the mother of all Islamic causes) was diverted to the "extortive Jews." Contributions that were meant for Bosnian Muslims were shared with Croats and Serbs. The Saudi regime sponsored a United Nations conference on Bosnia that was designed to ensure the destruction of Bosnian Muslims by denying them the means to defend themselves.

When individual citizens tried to intervene to help the Bosnians, the regime prohibited their travel in response to Western pressure, and then arrested these individuals when they returned to Saudi Arabia. The Bosnians know who their real supporters are, the "cream of youth who have slipped away from the grasp of the ruling regime."

The following lessons have been learned: Muslim regimes do not represent the will of their own people, human rights and equality are dead slogans of the west when it comes to Muslim matters, the United Nations is nothing but a tool to implement the Crusader's plan to kill the nation of Islam, and compliance with the United Nations constitutes conspiracy against Muslim causes.

Therefore, Muslims are urged to bypass the regime-sponsored charitable organizations and donate directly to trusted individuals who will ensure that the money is used for Muslim causes, not against them.

Statement 19, pp. 95-96: The Saudi Regime and the Repeated Tragedies of the Pilgrimage

8-12-1417 (16 April 1997)

Every year there are catastrophes and tragedies during that kill thousands of pilgrims. The Saudi regime has not taken the necessary precautions to prevent these tragedies. There are insufficient accommodations, which leads to crowdedness. The lack of security procedures, poor handling of events, and general negligence contribute to the problem. The number of pilgrims is increasing, yet little money is being spent on the problem. A little spending is all that's needed.

At the same time, the regime has made a big deal about the killing of a handful of American military personnel. "To satisfy the Americans, the regime offered the heads of a group of pure youth who are zealous about their belief , their country, and their nation....Since when are a handful of defiled Jewish souls and the conquering Americans more precious than thousands of guests of the most merciful and the pilgrims of his ancient house?" Adding insult to injury, the regime has kept some of the bodies of deceased pilgrims for autopsy materials.

Statement 20, pp. 97-98: (no title)

No date or signature

The recent arrest of scholars from Pakistan is one more example of the Saudi regime's "deep-rooted hate and animosity toward Islam." These guests were performing "the rituals of pilgrimage when they were arrested by Saudi intelligence services for the following charge: that some of them gave a fatwa in which they said that the Americans must be forced out of the land of the two holy mosques." These scholars were only doing their duty in honoring their covenant pledging to show the truth to the people. They mentioned nothing negative about the Saudi regime, which has demonstrated that it is not satisfied with that it is doing against its own people, but is seeking to generalize these rules of repression.

By its actions, the regime is actually strengthening the message of the scholars that have been persecuted. The scholars and influential people that have not condemned the regime's actions cannot be excused, as it is an obligation to help a brother Muslim.

Statement 21, pp. 103: Supporting the Fatwa by the Afghani Religious Scholars of Ejecting the American Forces Form the Land of the Two Holy Mosques

1-1-1419 (7 May 1998)

The united religious scholars of Afghanistan issued a fatwa that stresses the necessity of ejecting the American forces for the Arab peninsula and the land of the two holy mosques. The fatwa contained shari'a proofs that the entrance of these forces into this country is forbidden, and that their ejection is absolutely necessary. The responsibility of ejecting them and declaring jihad against the occupiers rests with the entire nation of Islam. This fatwa was originally issued eight years ago by Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-'Awdah, who willingly paid the price for their truthfulness. The prophet's last wish, may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him, was to drive the polytheists out of the peninsula, and he said that "the big countries are the cause of problems and instability in the region, and they are the ones that create incidents. They show up every time there is an incident under the pretense that they will improve the situation and eliminate the danger, yet they are the biggest danger of all. How can the fox be the shepherd for the sheep?"

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-003472

Title: Taliban and the State of Things in Afghanistan

Author: Unknown

Date: Unknown

Length: 5 pages

Synopsis

This document is a fragment of a document that discusses the geopolitical situation surrounding Afghanistan and the Taliban some time between 1998 and 2001. The author also defends the Taliban against various charges.

Key Themes

There is now a great opportunity for Sunnis, and more generally Muslims, to change the balance between Muslims and their enemies. The author cryptically takes note of "last week's local and global events," then argues that the Taliban are moving forward. This has caused the great powers, in the form of Iran, Russia, and the US, to threaten to intervene. The domestic opposition to the Taliban then rose in prominence to take advantage of the situation. The author hopes the recent economic failures in Asia [possibly referring to the Asian financial crisis of 1997] lead to the "final fall of Asia forever."

Iran has massed its troops on the border with Afghanistan, and Israeli advisers have been sent to help the Northern Alliance. The US launched missile attacks against Arab training camps and threatened to use nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Despite these attacks, Mullah Omar refuses to extradite Osama bin Laden.

From the military point of view, Iranian deployments have forced the withdrawal of the Taliban from some fronts. This has led to gaps in the front lines, which are potential weaknesses in the event of a coordinated attack. On September 5th, the Northern Alliance (in the form of the forces of Mas'ud and Sayyaf) attacked the Taliban, which led to setbacks, both for the Taliban and Arab fighters.

There are also allegations by some 'youths' that the Taliban support polytheists, and use secular laws to levy taxes. There is no evidence these charges are true, and the author warns against proceeding on hearsay. He cannot discount heresy in a country where 90% of the population is illiterate, but he has not seen it. Rumors are the deadliest weapon among Muslims, and should be avoided.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600053 (Letter One)

Date: Mid 1990s

Author: "Your Uncle"

Length: 32 pages Title: The Five Letters to the African Corps I

Synopsis: This letter is addressed to "Dear Brother Saif" and signed by "Your Uncle." The author has prepared a lengthy response to issues raised in two previous letters (not included in this collection) sent by Saif from Somalia where he is in charge of Al-Qa'ida activity. Uncle gives frank observations about the prospects for jihad in Somalia.

Key Themes: Uncle believes that Somalia is not ready for classic jihad and that Al-Qa'ida will not be able to find an ally with an identical intellectual force. The goal is to expel crusader forces from Somalia even if a semi-Islamic, semi-democratic government were to gain power.

Saif is warned that the Somali movement he is working with is in danger of isolating itself from the masses, and if the masses become suspicious of a movement it has no prospect for success.

The U.S. invasion of Somalia presents Saif with a golden opportunity to strike at the "bald eagle" now that it has landed unexpectedly in his sights.

Flexibility is required. If Al-Qa'ida could work with Sayyaf, Hikmatyar, and Burhan to achieve its purposes in Afghanistan, then Saif can work with Aideed, Mahdi, and Kharteet in Somalia. The Somali leadership, however, must be bolstered since they have even less manhood than Saddam Hussein and Arafat.

Uncle proposes a 5 point strategy to unite Somali forces and create an Islamic national front:

1. Expulsion of the foreign international presence.
2. Rebuilding of state institutions.
3. Establishment of domestic security.
4. Comprehensive national reconciliation.
5. Economic reform and combating famine.

The message ends with encouragement to persevere through financial difficulties and act according to the traditions "of our noble Messenger." Uncle cites God feeding Quraysh and the great Badr raid as examples of victories that come through the "confident belief that God will grant victory."

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600053 (Letter Two)

Date: September 30, 1993

Author: Hassan al-Tajiki

Length: 11 pages

Title: The Five Letters to the African Corps II

Synopsis: The letter provides an update and analysis concerning jihad activity in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Russia, and China.

Key Themes: Tajikistan is judged to be a challenging but not hopeless area for jihad activity. Russia is in chaos and the former republics of the Soviet Union are weak. America is preparing to fill the power vacuum in the region.

In Afghanistan America is supporting warlords and exploiting Civil War to neutralize opposition to its control of the region.

China is a rising power where future relations with the Islamic world will be of great importance. The letter concludes with an upbeat assessment for future jihad operations in Tajikistan.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600053 (Letter Three)

Date: May 24, 1994

Author: Hassan

Length: 36 pages

Title: The Five Letters to the African Corps III

Synopsis: Congratulations for the victory in Somalia and a strategic review of worldwide jihad operations. Success of the Africa Corps is contrasted with the difficult position of the Asian Corps.

Key Themes: Hassan begins by expressing his congratulations to the Africa Corps for their great victory in Somalia. He would like to join them in having difficulties traveling because he is now wanted for security reasons in Pakistan.

He asks the questions: "So how were our amazing Corps and its starving African Muslim allies able to be victorious over the greatest power in the world today?" The answer lies in the power of God, because "When we are truly fighting in the name and on behalf of God, we have nothing to fear..." In Somalia, Islamic forces were able to exploit America's Vietnam Complex, because the American's fear getting bogged down in a real war. Al-Qa'ida needs to develop a tactical doctrine to exploit the weakness of its great enemy, and a Counter-Intelligence strategy to confront the power of the American security agencies.

Victory in Somalia must be followed up to avoid giving the defeated foe time to regroup. The strategy of the "Jewish West" is to strike at the periphery of the Muslim lands. The original crusaders tried to strike at the center of the Islamic lands, but were defeated. The Crusaders adapted, conquered the periphery, and were then able to control the Arabian Peninsula and Palestine.

Somalia represents a victory for Al-Qa'ida on the periphery. The hour for regaining the heartland has arrived, but much training is required before this phase can begin.

While the Africa Corps has been successful, the Asian Corps is very weak with only 5 members. Yemen is described as a crucial battlefield, an auspicious location for declaring jihad in the Arabian Peninsula.

More effective radio broadcasts are needed to launch a propaganda campaign in Yemen and Somalia. Demands should include:

Evacuation of the Crusaders, Jews, and infidel forces from the Peninsula.

Destruction of churches and Jewish and Buddhist temples.

Hassan observes that radio stations are more powerful than atomic bombs and that several dozen committed young believers can bring correct teaching to the whole area. Martyrdom attacks in Yemen create an auspicious opportunity to declare jihad in the Arabian Peninsula.

Next comes a review of lessons learned in Tajikistan. Serious errors have been committed by the Nahdha who have relinquished their Islamic identity. Nahdha like Saddam Hussein exploits Islam to gain popular support, but by no means expresses true adherence to Islam.

In Kabul, warlords who pursue their own agendas are weakening the work of jihad.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600053 (Letter Four)

Date: May 24, 1994

Author: Hassan

Length: 14 pages

Title: The Fourth Letter about Jihad in the Caucasus

Synopsis: Hassan is writing from an Al-Qa'ida training camp and relates his disappointments concerning reverses Al-Qa'ida has experienced in Central Asia. He also seeks to apply lessons learned from the arrest of international terrorist Carlos.

Key Themes: In Tajikistan Al-Qa'ida has been outmaneuvered by the Nahdha movement and Ahmad Shah Mas'oud who have been able to extract arms and ammunition from Al-Qa'ida without providing training. Demoralized Mujahideen have been leaving the movement.

Arab fighters in northern Afghanistan are loathed by Mas'oud and his commanders and in Pakistan Arab fighters are restricted and harassed by Pakistani authorities. Combating Islam is now both a state motto and policy in that country. In Pakistan Islam is a "folkloric" religion.

Hassan states that Al-Qa'ida in Pakistan is besieged and that "All we have is the beleaguered space between our camp and Kabul in which to move with relative freedom."

Jews are gaining strength in Russia. Hassan engages in the eschatological speculation that the Jewish nuclear project will prepare the way for Armageddon and the rule of King Anti-Christ. He proposes bringing the jihad to Moscow with the ultimate objective of bringing jihad to Jerusalem.

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are essential fronts for fighting to overcome the developing American blockade in Central Asia.

The extradition of Carlos emphasizes the need for preserving strong, secure rear areas in Sudan and Afghanistan.

Hassan says that he is bored in Afghanistan and want to relocate his family to Sudan.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600053 (Letter Five)

Date: 1994?

Author: Hassan al-Tajiki

Length: 14 pages

Title: The Fifth Letter to the Africa Corps

Synopsis: An analysis evaluating the impact of jihad in the Caucasus. Written while fighting is raging in Grozny, Hassan sees this struggle holding great promise for the future of jihad.

Key Themes: The Soviet Union collapsed as a direct result of the war in Afghanistan. This left the U.S. to run the world in an autocratic manner. The U.S. alliance of Western states is fragile, however, due to the warfare inherent in the capitalist system.

The new world order is America against everyone, and everyone against the Muslim. The Jews have succeeded in creating a Crusader alliance among Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic churches. Then they added Hindu and Confucian Buddhist power in India, China, and Japan.

This alliance is fragile and just as the 11th and 12th century Crusaders succumbed to infighting, so too will this alliance. Jihadists can look forward to Russian gangs selling nuclear weapons and ultimately providing nuclear arms for the jihad.

The Caucasus is a strategically important zone because it provides access to the West. The U.S. is attempting to use Turkey and Pakistan to isolate the region, but the Chechens are rugged warriors. Furthermore, harsh Russia violence in the region means only opportunities for martyrdom and paradise for Muslims. The Crusader strategy will backfire because the "bloody governing" of the Russians will result in a disaster inflicted by Islamic forces.

Al-Qa'ida can best support Chechen rebels by striking in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Arab fighters are at a disadvantage in the area since they do not know the language and culture.

In an aside, Hassan comments that the jihadi missionary must be patient. Most Muslims will not pick up a weapon and declare jihad "unless he has tasted killing and felt the knife as it passed across his throat."

Therefore the Crusader wars are welcomed, but the "armed missionary must realize that his moving amongst Muslims whose Islam exists in Name only." Apostasy reigns, not only in Turkey and Pakistan, but also in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The challenge for Al-Qa'ida is to unite the rising jihadi spirit in Arab lands with that in the Caucasus. The regions of Ingushetia, Dagestan, Abkhazia, and Azerbaijan are fruitful areas for expansion because of the hostility toward Russia in those areas.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600080

Date: Unknown

Author: Unknown

Length: 53 pages

Title: Lessons Learned from the Armed Jihad Ordeal in Syria

Synopsis: A lengthy document of 20,000 words that examines the jihad waged against the Syrian regime of Hafez el Assad from 1976-1982. The document begins with a Chapter 2 entitled "Basics" followed by a Chapter 1 "Observations on the experience as a whole. This is followed by another Chapter 2 entitled "Lessons learned from the obstacles facing military jihad." The Syrian militants belong to one group called the Attalieaa-the Vanguard and their erstwhile allies in the Muslim Brotherhood fought secretly and openly against the Alawite regime in Damascus. Although brutally repressed, this campaign taught Islamic militants many valuable lessons.

Key Themes: Drawing on Islamic tradition and Twentieth Century examples of guerilla and information warfare, the study takes a critical look at the many failings of this campaign, and develops a strategy for waging jihad successfully.

Lessons learned can be grouped in these major categories:

Islamic Tradition: 18 Lessons Learned, of which the most important are:

Leadership Battles. The leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were more concerned about their leadership battles than the struggle. They are accused by the author of treason and criminal behavior against jihad. They betrayed the faith and devotion of the young followers. The Vanguard while strong in faith and dedication, were weak in leadership and training. Their Islamic devotion was blessed by Allah who saved them from deviant thought and deterioration.

Insufficient religious instruction. Fighters were either not properly taught or not sufficiently instructed in Islam. This problem became more acute as the original fighters were killed off and replaced by members who lacked proper understanding of Islam. Insufficient number of committed Mujahadeen to fill all important positions.

Lack of study in the Islamic tradition. A myriad of rich experiences were readily available for those seeking knowledge, but nobody bothered to study these traditions.

Failure to develop a public relations campaign to communicate Mujahid Revolutionary Theory, The most important element of any revolutionary struggle is to communicate the right message. This was not done and the people therefore did not support the struggle.

Untrustworthy Arab Regimes. While reluctantly willing to support jihad against Syria, the Arab neighbors were at best temporary allies. The leaders of the neighboring countries in reality feared Islam and imprisoned the faithful.

Excessive Dependence on Outside sources of support. Mujahideen must be self-sufficient, otherwise they become dependent on unreliable external benefactors. It is better to depend on stealing from the hostile regime, than to develop a dependency on external supporters

Failure to deter allies of Syria. The lack of a means to strike at the allies of Syria meant that Arab regimes suffered no penalty for assisting Damascus.

Lack of Scholarly Contribution. Islamic scholars in the region failed to contribute their knowledge, and the Mujahideen likewise did not make sufficient effort to seek out and develop religious scholars.

Unprepared Islamic Missionary Groups. These groups did not understand the requirements for jihad and failed to prepare their followers both spiritually and militarily for the struggle.

Pan-Arabism Undermining the Islamic Message. When secular, pan-Arab nationalist thinkers became involved in the movement, the message of jihad was distorted by an Iraqi Baath message.

Lack of Operational Security. Groups used open lines of communication which made it easy for intelligence services to collect information and control the movement.

While all of these lessons do not appear directly related to the Islamic tradition, the conclusion to this section states that despite the failings of the religious leaders, the Muslim masses demonstrated the power of jihad, and Allah honored their sacrifice. "A giving Muslim nation willing to sacrifice is the ultimate capital."

Lesson Learned in Jihad Operations and Guerrilla Warfare: (Text refers to "gang warfare" but the clear sense corresponds to the sense of guerrilla war)

No comprehensive Plan and strategy. The movement lacked a strategic vision, had no understanding of the importance of terrain, and failed to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Syrian regime. This led to events, not plans, controlling the course of the battle.

Insufficient screening of recruits. Mujahideen failed to vet carefully recruits. This allowed many government informers and moles to join, and betray the movement.

Improper Command Structure. The movement was too dependent on outside sources and field commanders were not given sufficient authority. The organization must be provided with sufficient resources instead of depending on raiding the resources of the opponents. Field commanders, however, must be in communication with a central command that performs the planning and strategy, or the field commanders may be isolated and subsequently destroyed.

Links to Intelligence Services. By developing relationships with the intelligence services of Arab states, the movement yielded its autonomy and came under the control of these groups.

Too Much Time Spent in Training Camps. Much of the time spent in training camps in other Arab countries was wasted because no military or spiritual training was pursued. Leaders must stay close to their troops to properly instruct, train, and inspire them.

Concentration of Forces. Too many of the forces were concentrated in Hama, Syria which allowed the Syrian military to concentrate its forces, encircle the city, and destroy the Mujahideen.

Detachment from the Masses. Citing a “gang (guerrilla) warfare theorist, the author repeats Mao’s familiar wisdom that “The masses are the sea in which the vanguard organization should swim like a fish.” The masses are the source of information, supplies, personnel, and organization. Successful examples of revolutionary war, Algeria, China, and Vietnam are contrasted with failures like Malaysia, Philippines, and Greece.

Adequate Supplies. Prior to launching an operation, the movement must have secured an adequate supply of arms and ammunition.

Communications Security. The organization must avoid open transmission of messages and develop a command structure that protects information and personnel from disclosure. Capture of fighters creates a problem if they are knowledgeable about the organization and its structure. The movement is encouraged to emulate the Italian Red Brigades, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and ETA to see how organizations can compartmentalize information and still achieve operational effectiveness.

Care for the Wounded. Plans must be made to allow for the evacuation of the wounded to care for them and most importantly to prevent them from being captured by the enemy.

Role of Families. Mujahideen must accept that their families will be involved in the struggle, and that family members will be subject to punishment and torture by the regime. Retaliatory attacks will raise the morale of civilians and encourage the fighters. An American expert is quoted as follows: “...the brutality a regime uses against the civilians in retaliation to acts committed by the revolution is the best gift a revolution can receive, even neutral people will end up joining their ranks, the regime will be seen as the oppressor and the revolution will be seen as the just and fair side.”

Victory. The war will not be won by defeating the enemy on the battlefield. Using the tools of modern communication combined with the power of faith the jihad will ultimately prevail. Victory will come in a protracted war in which the enemy is defeated through exhaustion and annoyance. Mujahideen must be smart, dedicated, and well trained, and only the fighters with the right personality and temperament can make successful mujahideen. Ultimately Allah will provide the victory.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600086

Title: Meeting Notes

Author: Unknown

Date: Unknown

Length: 11 pages

Synopsis

A set of notes covers a variety of themes, including views of the Pakistani government on Afghanistan, the goals of participation in Afghanistan's conflicts, and divergent views on the progress of the fight in Afghanistan, as well as the country's overall utility to global jihad.

Key Themes

The document appears to be several copies a set of notes taken from at least one meeting. As a result, there are persistent themes, but they are often difficult to parse. The notes appear to be talking about at least two 'projects.'

In the first project, the immediate goal of participation is lifting the morale of the Afghans, training Arabs, and instilling the spirit of jihad. The long-term is to wage jihad against the Jews in Palestine.

In the second project, the immediate goal of participation is fighting in battle and following the strategy of the Peshawar leader. The long-term goal is the liberation of South Yemen from Communism.

There are a number of recurring themes:

Sayyaf [probably referring to Abu Sayyaf, a mujahidin leader] is the best leader of the nation, based on the recommendation of 'Abdullah 'Azzam. Hikmatyar is also mentioned as a good leader. It is best to keep silent about their defects.

Some within the Pakistani government are allies, and some are enemies. The mujahidin have apparently done the will of different Pakistani governments on at least one occasion, when they joined Hikmatyar in fighting the Rabbani government in Kabul. Benazir Bhutto is against the mujahidin. The Indian sub-continent is the greatest enemy of Islam.

As the heart of the Muslim world, Egypt is the first place that should have the revived Caliphate, not Afghanistan. There is no hope for Afghanistan, and fighting there is not jihad. It is a lost cause. Instead, people should get training there and go back home. By contrast, the document later says that complete participation is required in transforming Afghanistan into a base for jihad, from which the mujahidin can support the needy through military elements and supplies.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600087

Length: 60 pages

Date: August 7, 1994

Title: Book by Mustafa Hamid

Author: Mustafa Hamid

Synopsis

A book written by Mustafa Hamid in which he discusses his involvement in the international jihad, mainly in Afghanistan as well as his belief in radical Islam and path to involvement in the international jihad.

Key Themes

The first quarter of the book provides a general history of the Afghan jihad and key actors in the conflict including a description of the management and manipulation of the hostilities by the Pakistani and American intelligence services. He also comments on the fervor of Arab mujahidin fighting with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was weaker than those fighting in Afghanistan.

The second quarter of the book begins to discuss his account of his involvement in fighting in Lebanon during the 1970's. Hamid describes how his belief in Islam faltered during this period due to the defeat suffered by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the organization's absence from the conflict in Lebanon. Later, having regained his faith, the author became disillusioned with the PLO and the outcome of the Lebanese conflict. It was at this time that his Islamic faith began to revive and he started thinking about forming his own jihad organization in Abu Dhabi. While in Abu Dhabi Hamid had a chance encounter with a delegation of Afghan sheikhs from the Paktia province, who told him of the possibilities for jihad in their country. After this meeting the author decided to move to Afghanistan to participate in the jihad against the Soviet Union instead of forming his own group.

Starting on page 23 and continuing to the end of the book Hamid describes his journey to Afghanistan through Pakistan, how he acquire weapons and other fighting equipment and his work as a journalist for the al-Fajr and al-Ittihad newspapers. Other interesting anecdotes include encounters with mujahidin from the Soviet Union, difficulties faced by the mujahidin, such as Soviet attacks during Ramadan and Osama bin-Laden's role in digging cave and tunnel networks in preparation for the attack against the Khost airport in 1990-1991.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600088

Title: Mustafa Hamid's Analysis of Mujahidin Activities

Author: Various

Date: Events take place in 1989, written some time after 1996

Length: 61 pages

Synopsis

Mustafa Hamid discusses and analyzes the events surrounding the mujahidin in 1989. Specifically, he is interested in the failures of the mujahidin, the failure of attack on Jalalabad, and the wider attacks by the US, Israel, Pakistan, and other countries and entities against the Islamist movement after the Soviets left Afghanistan. He also compares the overall progress of the campaigns in Palestine and Afghanistan.

Key Themes

While the document contains a fair amount of narrative that details Hamid's travels in Afghanistan, Abu Dhabi, and Pakistan in 1989, the bulk of the document is devoted to a somewhat pessimistic analysis of the failures of the mujahidin and the outside forces that were conspiring against them in 1989.

The failures of the mujahidin

After ten years of fighting, the mujahidin formed a provisional government in Rawalpindi, but the various mujahidin organizations were still more powerful than the government, which largely remained in exile in Pakistan. Hamid assesses that the mujahidin need to form a more powerful permanent government.

The failure and implications of Jalalabad

The mujahidin staged an attack against the city of Jalalabad, and were beaten back with great losses. According to Hamid, Jalalabad was a major defeat for the mujahidin. While the government's equipment and training were better, the morale of the mujahidin was better, but they were too weak to make a direct attack. Consequently, Jalalabad was a bad choice for an attack. Arab jihadis were 'tricked' into going to Jalalabad and dying in droves. Hamid also seems to believe that recruitment of many Afghan Arabs was in part a US ploy to get them to die in Afghanistan. Hamid had serious misgivings about the continued enthusiasm of the Arabs (by such people as 'Abu Ubaydah) for dying in Jalalabad. The Western media focused disproportionately on Jalalabad, proclaiming it to be the central battle of the war, and thus called the mujahidin a failure when they lost the battle. Hamid argues that the Pakistani ISI intervened to make sure that the city would not fall: first, the mujahidin advanced along a route that looked to be successful, but the Pakistani ISI agent in residence stopped the advance until government forces had moved up and surrounded the Arabs, who refused to withdraw, and were destroyed. Although this happened under the watch of then-ISI director Hamid Jul, Mustafa Hamid doubts he knew of or approved the operation. Nevertheless, the Western media, in a move orchestrated by the US, began blaming Hamid Jul for the loss of Jalalabad, and turned against the mujahidin, proclaiming that the new threat after Communism was Wahhabi Islam.

The failure of the attack on Malani and Nadad

Hamid also describes a trip he took to the front with Haqani's assistant Mawlawzi Nizam-al-Din, where the mujahidin were attempting to attack the forts of Malani and Nada. Hamid fell into an ambush, but survived. The planned attack against the forts failed, largely because the Jarbiz tribe was apparently playing both sides, and took weapons for themselves, calls for mediation weakened the jihadists, and the attack was postponed, possibly because some commanders had been bribed.

The role of al-Qa'ida

In this document, Jalaludin Haqani first conceives of the plan to take Khost (covered later in AFGP-2002-600090 and AFGP-2002-600092). Al-Qa'ida assigned people to help Hamid plan the attack, however it then pulled them to participate in the failed attack against Jalalabad. Hamid believes that the strategy of 'Abu Abdullah (probably Usama bin Laden) is gravely mistaken, but the young jihadis follow him blindly.

Pakistan turns against the mujahidin

Pakistan's machinations were partly responsible for the failure of the attack on Jalalabad, and more generally for the failure of the mujahidin. Hamid argues that once the US put Benazir Bhutto's government in power, in order to consolidate her position, she fired Hamid Jul, the director of the ISI. The mujahidin thus lost their last major supporter within Pakistan. Some leaders began looking into accepting a political solution.

The al-Qa'ida 'hijacking' and the death of 'Abdullah 'Azzam – Intrigue from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the US, and Israel

Hamid recounts a conversation he had with 'Abu 'Abdullah (probably Usama bin Laden) after they were deported from the Sudan, where 'Abdullah analyzed the events of 1989. He identified two important events for the mujahidin in Pakistan. First, Muhtassib, a former member of al-Qa'ida, was accused of taking part in a plot to blow up a plane traveling from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia. Second, the ideological leader of much of the jihadist movement, 'Abdullah 'Azzam, was assassinated. Hamid believes that 'Abdullah al-Mani', the director of the Saudi Red Crescent in Peshawar, and his associate, Abu 'Umran, were involved in framing him. Muhtassib wanted to send a suitcase to Jeddah, and Abu 'Umran agreed to help him, but at some point put explosives in the suitcase, and sent Muhtassib to the airport such that he would be captured and tortured by Pakistani intelligence. As for 'Abdullah 'Azzam, who was killed in a bomb attack the next day, Abu 'Abdullah claimed that Saudi Arabia and Israel both wanted to kill him because of his opposition to their policies, and the Saudis, in the form of 'Abdullah al-Mani and his organization, seem to have carried out the attack.

Opposition to 'Azzam

In the background, the US and the UK (as well as Israel) ramped up negative international media coverage of the mujahidin, and convinced Pakistan through Interpol that there were hijacking threats from the mujahidin. 'Azzam's assistant Tamin al-'Ani also died during an operation in the US. Under this theory, the plane hijacking plot had to be 'uncovered' before the assassination of 'Azzam in order for the Pakistanis and the Saudis to justify their crackdowns on the mujahidin, and to ruin the worldwide reputation of the mujahidin, and label them as terrorists. Although the US

expected that the Arabs would retaliate for the death of 'Azzam (thus decreasing their reputation even further) instead they did nothing for fear of repercussions.

Hamid himself assesses that 'Azzam was killed due to the Palestinian issue. The war in Afghanistan led to the discovery of jihad by thousands of young Muslim men, and to the formation of Hamas, an explicitly Islamic movement, in the Palestinian territories. The PLO and Israel both considered Hamas to be a threat, and secretly began colluding to defeat Hamas and Islamist movements in general. The Muslim Brotherhood also was irritated by the Islamist movement, and warned 'Azzam away from Palestine. As a result of all these factors, 'Azzam's enemies decided to kill him. Hamid continues later that 'Azzam contradicted himself on US aid, since the mujahidin were receiving US aid, even while 'Azzam denied this. This, and his other blunders, such as his close public relationship with Hikmatiar even as Hikmatiar's men staged an ambush against another Afghan leader (Ahmad Shah Masud) in the Farkhar Massacre, led the jihad movement to weaken and lose support. Hamid believes that this was also a plot by the US to keep the mujahidin off-balance.

Comparison of Palestine and Afghanistan

Hamid also compares the conflicts in Palestine and Afghanistan. In both conflicts there is international involvement. In both cases, the US replaced previous powers in the region, although the Jews, who secretly control the world, saw their influence increase as a result of establishing a state in Palestine. In terms of military strategy, in both cases, the Arabs were weak, and without strategy. In Afghanistan, they depended on the ISI. As far as training, in Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood volunteers were the best trained (Hamid is talking in particular about Israel's war of independence in 1948), while in Afghanistan, the mujahidin were poorly trained at first, but rectified this later on. In the fighting itself, the Arab countries knew Israel was going to win, and allowed volunteers to go anyway. In Afghanistan, the West encouraged Arab volunteers, and Arab countries facilitated their travel. This was followed, however, by a liquidation of the mujahidin after the wars were over. In the case of Palestine, Egypt turned on the Muslim Brotherhood. In the case of Afghanistan, the US and the international media smeared the mujahidin, and eventually succeeded in getting the mujahidin kicked out of Pakistan, as well as attacked by intelligence services back in their home countries.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600090

Title: "The Airport 1990"

Author: Mustafa Hamid

Date: Describes events that took place in 1989 and 1990

Length: 150 pages

Summary

Mustafa Hamid details the Battle of Torghar, and analyzes the importance of Torghar for the fight to take Khost as well as the military development of the mujahidin during the campaign. He also analyzes the failed March 1990 coup. This document is a prequel to AFGP-2002-600092.

Key Themes

Narrative of the Battle of Torghar

Mustafa Hamid narrates in great detail the process by which the mujahidin took over Torghar mountain in February 1990, and acquired a strategic advantage over Communist forces in the siege of Khost.

As a journalist, at the end of 1989, Hamid decides to work with Jalaladin Haqani to produce a jihadi magazine, *Manba'a al-Jihad*. Some parts of the document are essays from the magazine, and as such adopt a journalistic tone. While touring the region with Abu al-Hareth (with Hajji Farid serving as his interpreter, and Hajji Ibrahim as his assistant), Mustafa Hamid first gets the idea to close the Khost airport, which he does successfully later in the year. During this tour he also experiences heaving bombing from the Communists.

Before his trip to Torghar, Hamid sends his wife and children to Islamabad, after they are subject to harassment in Peshawar. He also meets with Jalaladin Haqani in January 1990. Haqani is the mujahidin leader in charge of attacking Mount Torghar, but up until that time, repeated waves of Mujahidin attacks have been unsuccessful in taking it, including a recent attack by Ismail Kheil that is coordinated very poorly. Hamid estimates that, with Torghar conquered, 70% of the work for taking over Khost will be accomplished.

After the failed attacks, Haqani formulates a new plan. During the campaign, missiles narrowly miss Haqani several times, leading Hamid to be suspicious of how the enemy knows where he is. He guesses that the USSR is still involved via air attacks. An attack by Hakam Khan and Hanif Shah fails again due to poor coordination and disagreement about the use of tanks. Hamid gets an idea to poison the water supply of Khost to sicken enough people to overwhelm the city's hospitals, and he requests help from Abu-Hafs, but it does not seem to go anywhere.

At one point, a British journalist named Tim, embeds himself with Haqani, and Hamid serves as his host. He notes Tim's complete neutrality and lack of emotion, but also detests him. Several months after the battles, Hamid tells Tim that the mujahidin have not yet taken Khost because of Pakistani and US interference.

The mujahidin finally attack Torghar successfully on 16 February 1990. The attack from the south side is the most logical from the enemy's point of view, and although the southern thrust is not the

mujahidin's main attack, the enemy shifts most of their forces to confront them there. This leaves the way open for a renewed attack on the western slope, as well as on the eastern slope, where the mujahidin have painstakingly worked their way through a mine field, taking the enemy by surprise. Hamid notes that the mujahidin suffer only one dead in the final attack, leading him to proclaim that they have God's support. In the aftermath, children come up to greet the victorious mujahidin, the mujahidin assault and take Little Torghar to clear the mountain completely of enemy forces, and Haqani builds a paved road to the summit to cement the mujahidin's control of Torghar. After interrogating some captives, the mujahidin confirm that the enemy forces are fractious, and morale is low, but the Communists are determined to fight to the end.

The US and Pakistan versus the mujahidin and al-Qa`ida

Hamid is suspicious of Pakistan's intentions for the mujahidin, and blames the Pakistani intelligence service for the catastrophic loss at Jalalabad. He describes how General Imam of the Pakistani intelligence service is present at the Battle of Torghar, up to no good, and how he interferes with Haqani's plans. Hamid also assesses that the goal of the US is ultimately to encourage a negotiated settlement between Islamists and Communists, so it works to prevent a complete victory by the mujahidin, and to keep Najibullah in power. Any mujahidin attacks that fail give encouragement to the US and the USSR, especially as the Afghans are (in Hamid's view) responsible for the fall of the USSR. Hamid also blames his anti-US views for being the reason his articles in al-Itihad were not published.

The parties in Peshawar are often at odds with Haqani, and accused him of issuing a magazine as a step to forming a political party, played other 'dirty games,' and were probably happy that Abdallah Azzam was assassinated. At one point, Hamid describes meeting Abu-Hafs, who is under pressure from the Pakistani government, and suggests getting a British or European attorney to represent him, since Pakistan respects the UK.

Analysis of the importance of the Battle of Torghar

Hamid describes these two articles as the first writing on the battles for Khost. One of the reasons for success is the appearance of Jalaladin Haqani, who is a rare combination of religiosity and competence. The Battle of Torghar was a special siege within the more general siege of Khost. Attacks against Torghar failed for years, and the enemy was well dug in. The mujahidin adopted an indirect approach, where they worked their way closer to the mountain, and gradually cut it off. They then attacked on the seemingly impossible east side, and convinced the enemy that the southern thrust was the main attack. In Hamid's opinion, the battle of Torghar also showed that tanks, which provided mobile artillery, could be used to great effect in mountainous terrain. In the final analysis, the mujahidin enjoyed better morale and command ability than the enemy, but the enemy enjoyed a higher quality and quantity of equipment. Following the capture of Torghar, the mujahidin were able to cut off the airport and all smuggling routes, thus starving Khost. After Torghar fell, the enemy knew Khost was lost.

The military development of the Mujahidin action in Khost

Hamid goes over six features of the changes the mujahidin adopted in the battle for Khost that ultimately resulted in their victory. First, while the Paktia tribes in particular were enthusiastic and

skillful fighters, the mujahidin needed to transform themselves into a conventional fighting force to beat the Communists. They accomplished this by instituting a shura (advisory) council that amassed authority and served as a forum for the various tribes to discuss strategy and tactics. The shura council was successful in stopping smuggling by the tribes themselves, but was less useful for coordinating direct military action, where it was vulnerable to delays. Second, the government broadcast constant propaganda, but mujahidin morale was still good. The mujahidin were able to boost morale by avoiding human losses in battles. In addition, the long siege lowered the government's morale, as did the mujahidin's own loudspeaker propagandists. Government defectors received good treatment, which increased defections. Finally, the mujahidin immediately used any weapons or ammunition they captured, decreasing the black market value of the spoils. Third, Khost's location was good for the mujahidin – supply lines from Pakistan were short, and the mountains gave the fighters natural defenses against air attacks. The mujahidin were also able to use local fighters who knew the terrain, remembered effective tactics against the British, and, because they were more effective in small numbers, were able to concentrate their forces and overwhelm the enemy in specific locations. Fourth, the mujahidin greatly increased their mobility was the adoption of motorized vehicles that moved along paved roads. Fifth, the mujahidin were able to concentrate their tanks for attacks against single targets, and as a result, tanks were decisive in the battles of Nadir-Shah-Cout, Dwamindo, Daraji, and Torghar. Sixth, the mujahidin used wireless communications systems to coordinate well.

Analysis of failed coup of March 1990

In the last section, Hamid analyzes the failed coup against Afghan leader Najibullah on 6 March 1990, which he sees as emblematic of larger problems. The USSR wanted to continue Communism in Afghanistan, but failed, and both the US and Saudi Arabia encouraged the mujahidin, then killed them. For instance, Saudi Arabia sent provocateurs to stir up conflicts within the mujahidin. Finally, the Afghans themselves killed Arabs who were drawn into their tribal battles. The secularists of the Middle East (including Egypt and Turkey's governments) are traitors, as are some mujahidin who are working in concert with the US and Russia. Hamid sees the war as one between Islam and infidels – politics has no place in it.

In the face of the coup attempt, Najibullah came down hard, although it is apparent that the USSR sold him out long ago. On the positive side, the Communist army was cleansed due to the coup, which is good for the mujahidin. On the negative side, the coup revealed the disunity of the Peshawar parties, and weakened jihad, especially when some Afghan claimed to be Muslim. The ongoing stagnation of the mujahidin is resulting in lost opportunities.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600092

Title: "A Mother's Deep Sorrow"/"The Airport Project"

Author: Mustafa Hamid AKA Abu al-Walid

Date: August – September 1990

Length: 105 pages

Synopsis

Mustafa Hamid keeps a detailed day-by-day account of the Airport Project, which aims to shut down the Khost airfield for a month through continuous rocket attacks, thus convincing the enemy to stop using the airfield.

Key Themes

A Mother's Deep Sorrow

The first section is a description of the death of Isma'il, the brother of Hakani, a warlord along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, at the hands of an incompetent doctor in Miranshah. His mother, whom Mustafa refers to as the Great Mother, dies soon after. Although she does not fight, Mustafa waxes at length on how she provides emotional support and hope on the 'internal front', which is just as important as the battlefield. The Great Mother dies soon after Isma'il, lamenting that she will not live to see the results of jihad in Afghanistan. For Mustafa, the past year has been a time of both sorrow and victory.

The Airport Project

Most of the rest of the document is dedicated to a highly detailed first-person account of what is referred to as the Airport Project. This is an operation, run by Mustafa that aims to deny the use of the airfield at Khost to the enemy (the Communists) for long enough that they cease to use it as a means of reinforcing their troops in Khost. The mujahidin launch approximately 1200 rockets over the course of one month, which is enough to convince the enemy to stop using the airfield.

The account begins on August 3, 1990, with a confirmation that Iraq has invaded Kuwait. The next day, Mustafa, a leader of Camp Abu Al-Abbas, begins preparations for the operation. The most essential material is ammunition, and much of the account describes Mustafa's attempts to find enough rockets to carry out the plan. Camp Abu Al-Abbas is a series of caves dug into a mountainside. The other cooperating jihadist centers appear to be close by, or at least within several hours drive of each other inside Afghanistan. In preparation for the operation, Mustafa and others select sites for a number of different launchers, and have small camps built in those locations.

There appear to be five launchers in operation at any given time, and operations for the most part take place at night, when the enemy is attempting to resupply Khost under cover of darkness. The launchers are sited such that each one covers a different part of the airfield. The mujahidin stationed on the observation points on top of the mountain sight planes landing or taking off. Each launcher team then communicates with the other teams by radio (which often fail, or are jammed by the enemy), and coordinates firing (continuously if possible). The teams aim to prevent airplanes from taking off or landing, or barring that, to destroy the planes on the ground and/or

prevent them from unloading their cargo. The effectiveness of each team is occasionally harmed because some of the mujahidin are taking vacations to Miranshah at any given time.

The enemy adopts a two-pronged strategy in response to the mujahidin attacks. First, it continuously adapts its tactics for landing and unloading planes, for example by using helicopters to escort transport planes so as to confuse the mujahidin. Second, it regularly targets the mujahidin launcher teams with air strikes, and later with cluster bombs, although it is clear the enemy does not know exactly where the teams are. The mujahidin suffer almost no casualties from the attacks.

Lack of ammunition and transportation are consistent problems for the mujahidin. Mustafa has difficulty getting some of the teams, particularly that run by Abu Tamim, to fire continuously because they are worried about running out of rockets. In fact, at one point approximately halfway through the operation, the mujahidin do in fact run out of rockets, and the enemy succeeds in landing a number of planes. It is also difficult to transport more rockets and supplies to the launcher sites because for much of the operation the mujahidin do not have a working car, and must resort at times to donkeys.

The Arab jihadis and Afghans

Mustafa is ambivalent about the role of the Arab jihadis. They are often difficult to control because they seek to be martyrs on their own terms. The other unit commanders are also often at odds with each other about tactics, and even overall strategy. Mustafa becomes quite angry with his allies on a number of occasions. There is also tension between the Arab jihadis and the Afghans. The Arabs believe the Afghans are content to be trained, and then, once the Communists are removed, to steal things and/or to go home, without being mindful of the need to establish an Islamic state in Afghanistan. Mustafa is also at times dismayed by the lack of operational security among the Afghans, as it is their custom to regale their friends with tales of their battles. For their part, the Afghans resent the Arabs for not letting them operate the launchers at times, and for not trusting them with the best equipment.

Interactions with Al-Qa'ida

Mustafa's interactions with al-Qa'ida are in general not positive. The main (administrative/political) wing of al-Qa'ida is too bureaucratic, and not supportive of the Airport Project, although it promises support at the beginning. At the outset, al-Qa'ida pulls a number of Arab jihadis who would have been useful, and reassigns them to defend Saudi Arabia from Iraq. Only about a third of the required rockets that al-Qa'ida promises actually arrive in the beginning. Mustafa further complains that al-Qa'ida is focused on its camps rather than actual battles, and that the organization only has focus when Usama bin Laden gets involved. Mustafa's discord with al-Qa'ida is slightly alleviated when, towards the end of the operation, with the support of Abu Hafs, the military wing of al-Qa'ida delivers the balance of promised rockets, and at the end of the document he mentions that he is uncomfortable operating against the commands of al-Qa'ida. This is all the more frustrating because Mustafa intimates that there are long periods of time when al-Qa'ida is unresponsive to the mujahidin's requests for orders and supplies.

Discussion of the political situation and political intrigue

Mustafa has a number of discussions with other mujahidin leaders and with al-Qa'ida about the political situation in Afghanistan, and in the Middle East. At first, he seems to believe that the Gulf War is actually a joint plan by Iraq and the US to take over the Middle East. Usama bin Laden apparently calls for Arabs to return to Saudi Arabia to defend it, and Saudi religious scholars support the presence of Americans troops in Saudi Arabia (temporarily), which confuses Mustafa. Part of the problem of unclear guidance about the political situation appears to be the lack of religious scholars, a void that has not been filled since the death of Abdallah Azzam. Mustafa is also suspicious of Arab jihad organizations, especially those under the Salafi banner, and thinks they will only come to ruin.

Mustafa at one point wonders about the future of him and his family after the end of the war. This is all the more important because his family begins feeling political pressure due to his activities. Mustafa's wife and children live for a time in Peshawar, where the children are enrolled in a Saudi school, but they are forced to leave after Saudi intelligence operatives begin interrogating them about Mustafa's activities.

Mustafa also relays his thoughts about US involvement in Afghanistan. In his view, the US was nowhere to be found during the actual fight with the Soviets. Once the Soviets decided to withdraw, the US sent in Stinger missiles so that it could say that its technology had defeated the Soviets. This allows the US to sell more of its weapons around the world. By and large, the US strategy is to deny either side a complete victory, and force the mujahidin and the Communists to come to a negotiated peace.

Rise of the new airport

Finally, in response to the closing of the old airport, the enemy actually begin building a new airport out of the range of the launchers. At first, Hakani, the top mujahidin leader, does not believe that the new airfield's tarmac is of high enough quality to accept planes, so they do nothing about it. Unfortunately for them, this turns out to be untrue, and the enemy begins landing planes at the new airfield. Although the mujahidin eventually begin attacking this one as well, Mustafa estimates that this mistake cost the mujahidin about six months before they were finally able to take over Khost.

Conclusion

Mustafa assesses that the Airport Project is successful because it does close down the old airfield and destroy about a dozen enemy planes, even though the enemy builds a new airport. In the latter parts of the documents, he begins talking about preparations for new operations, not only against the new airport, but also more conventional offensives to take over Khost and other cities held by the Communists.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600106

Title: Letter from Abu-'Ata' al-Sharqi

Author: Abu-'Ata' al-Sharqi

Date: 21 March 1994

Length: 2 pages

Synopsis

The author discusses various conflicts surrounding al-Faruk camp within and between leaders of al-Qaeda and al-Furkan. He suggests moving into Tajikistan for strategic reasons.

Key Themes

The document is actually a description of the letter, not the letter itself.

The author brings up Al-Faruk, a training facility. Al-Furkan Project, owner of the camp, is commanded by Abu Walid al-Masri. Al-Qaeda and Al-Furkan have been negotiating over control of the facility. There is some concern about a lack of coordination (or even insubordination). Abu Kin'an went behind the back of the author, and does not have the ability to run the camp. Al-Qaeda is qualified, however. Abu Khabab came to the camp and gave a course, but there was no prior agreement with Abu-Kin'an. The author is also upset that he had to provide the land for the camp, even though it does not fall under his authority (he is the leader of the Jihadwal area). The camp is apparently controlled by the Tajiks.

The author encourages al-Qaeda and the Furkan Project to work together to figure out why Russia collapsed. He also suggests getting into Tajikistan by providing training and financial support to the Tajiks. This will harm the Americans and Russians. This is why the Arabs were expelled from Bishawir [Peshawar?]: to prevent them from getting into Central Asia. Moving in Tajikistan will also strengthen al-Qaeda's hand as it will gain control over al-Faruk camp. Abu-Walid needs to know the author (presumably) is in charge of everything in Jihadwal.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-600970

Length: 64 pages

Date: unknown

Title: Mustafa's History of the Afghan Jihad

Author: Mustafa

Synopsis

An essay chronicling the history of the anti-communist Islamic jihad in Afghanistan. The work covers the key political figures and groups and explains their roles in the development of the conflict. Key themes include organization of the anti-communist jihad, problems with attracting foreign financial assistance and American involvement in the war.

Key Themes

The essay covers the history of the anti-communist jihad in Afghanistan beginning during the reign of King Zahir Shah and continuing through the reigns of presidents Daub Khan, Muhammad Turaqi, ending during the Soviet period. The roles of Muhammad Younis Khalis and Abdul Rasool Sayyaf and their attempts to gain financial support from foreign donors are the main topics of the work. The American role in the conflict receives significant attention.

According to the text, the resistance in Afghanistan during the reign of President Turaqi was characterized by discord among the various Islamic groups, which prevented any coordinated action against the communists. In fact, the only consensus that was reached was to gather money and support from various Islamic countries until the opposition could become strong enough to fight the Afghan communist army. In the author's opinion the state of paralysis among the anti-communist mujahidin would have lasted indefinitely had it not been for the initiative and vision of Muhammad Younis Khalis, who effectively started the jihad in Afghanistan by declaring war on the Afghan communist government through a fatwa and then initiating hostilities from the mountains of Nangarhar province with the few men and weapons he could muster.

The early stages of the jihad are characterized by the Communists' tenuous hold on power due to the threat of an Islamic revolution. To counter this threat the communist government accepted aid from the Soviet Union in the form of weapons and military advisors. This support, with which the mujahidin could not compete, presented Muhammad Younis Khalis and other leaders of the jihad with one of their main challenges: attracting financial support sufficient to counter the Soviet influence.

Khalis and the other leaders saw great potential for assistance from oil-rich countries like Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States though little money was actually received. Despite their failure in attracting Saudi oil money they were marginally successful in attracting money from Iran and support in the form of non-military supplies from Pakistan. However, in the end the mujahidin were unable to receive aid in sufficient amounts to counter the Soviet influence.

The main reason for Khalis' failure to raise sufficient funds, according to the author, was his relative obscurity among foreign donors. In addition to Khalis' lack of exposure the author cites several other reasons for insufficient levels of foreign aid, mainly uninformed donation and American involvement in the conflict. Specifically, had the donor's known who they were donating to they would not have given money to corrupt anti-Arab Afghan groups.

The later entry of the United States into the conflict also exacerbated the problem of concentrating foreign assistance in the hands of jihad groups favored by Khalis. Specifically, the author argues that the United States supported leaders such as Birhan Ad-Din Rabbani and Qalb ad Din Hekmyetar, two of the most extreme anti-Arab Afghan leaders who eventually worked to pressure Arab mujahidin out of Afghanistan once they gained enough power.

Abdul Rasool Sayyaf is the other jihad leader who receives considerable attention in the essay. His rise to power in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan began when a group of Islamic countries convened a conference to study possible reactions to the invasion. Though the conference did not produce any substantial resolutions or support for the Afghan rebels Sayyaf emerged as the leader of the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan, an umbrella organization uniting a number of factions for the purpose of effectively working with foreign governments.

In the author's opinion, Sayyaf's greatest contribution was his successful fundraising for the jihad. Upon taking the reigns of the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan, Sayyaf and other leaders embarked on a fundraising trip to Dubai and other parts of the United Arab Emirates. Sayyaf is said to have been widely successful in his mission due to his ability to speak fluent Arabic and his knowledge of Arab culture.

While Sayyaf's Arabic skills were invaluable, his overall fundraising philosophy was also an extremely important element of his success. According to the author, Sayyaf's underlying rejected the idea of the "Afghan jihad" as a national undertaking in the Western political understanding. Rather, Sayyaf adhered to the idea that all Muslim people are united in one nation and are required to support their Muslim brothers. Therefore, the jihad in Afghanistan was considered a pan-Islamic undertaking in which all Muslims must lend their support.

Consequently, Sayyaf's delegation made every effort to appeal to the Islamic people rather than seek support from governments. Further, they avoided public events and locations which would have appeared ostentatious and aloof of their targeted donors, the common people. In doing so they sought to emphasize the value of individual monetary and physical contributions of average Muslims to the jihad.

In the essay Siyaf's fundraising approach is contrasted to that taken by the Palestinian Authority (PA) when it was raising support against Israel in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Specifically, Sayyaf successfully appealed to the Muslim masses, in the end facilitating the mujahidin defeat of the Soviet Union, while the PA worked to establish ties with Arab governments but never gained significant support and never defeated Israel.

In addition to chronicling the roles of key individuals, the author provides insight into the mujahidin perspectives on American involvement in the conflict including American motivation and the extent of American influence. Throughout the text the United States is portrayed as a manipulator of events in Afghanistan. The author notes that the Soviet invasion occurred during an American transition of presidential power. Consequently, no action could be taken by Islamic countries until America diverted its attention from internal politics and granted permission to take action. In effect, the United States played the role of puppet master in Afghanistan, orchestrating events and

manipulating the actors. Further evidence of American manipulation is the captured American intelligence from the Tehran embassy, revealing America's prior knowledge of Soviet intentions to invade Afghanistan. The fact that this was known to the United States proves complicity and manipulation of events.

The main reason for American involvement in the conflict, according to the essay, was the desire to improve its image in the Islamic world in relation to the Soviet Union. Specifically, the author reasons that the United States saw an easy opportunity to improve its image after the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran and being branded "The Great Satan" during the Iranian Revolution. By giving the Soviets free reign to invade and occupy Afghanistan the Soviet world image would suffer. At the same time, by helping the Afghans against the Soviets the America saw a vehicle for improving its own image in the Islamic world.

Interestingly, many mujahidin accepted American support despite America's anti-Islamic image among the mujahidin. One reason for this acceptance stems from the Sunni-Shi'a division within Islam. The author points out that at the time of the conflict many Sunni Muslims believed Shi'a Islam to be more dangerous than the Christians or the Jews. Given America's anti-Iran stance and support of Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War they felt that they could justify acceptance of American support in Afghanistan.

In addition to the themes of fundraising and the American role in the conflict the essay touches upon a range of other topics in varying detail. These topics include corruption and mismanagement of funds within the network of Islamic charitable organizations, the Soviet use of the scorched earth policy in reaction to mounting guerilla opposition and the level of support for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Additionally, the author discusses factors influencing the anti-communist jihad such as defections by Islamists in the Afghan army to the mujahidin and the support received from Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-601402

Length: 2 pages

Date: unknown

Title: Condolence Letter

Author: Abd al-Hamid

Synopsis

This is a letter expressing condolences and describing the author's situation in Afghanistan. The letter is written by an individual named Abd al-Hamid and is addressed to a man named Abu al-Qayim.

Key Themes

The letter consists of two main parts. The first includes Abd al-Hamid's expression of condolences to Abu al-Qayim although it is unclear what exactly happened. Regardless, al-Hamid urges him to keep his faith and maintain his devotion to God and religion.

The second part consists of Abd al-Hamid's description of his situation in Afghanistan. He characterizes his circumstances as generally bad and identifies strained relations with the local people as the main reason. According to the letter, the problem stems from differing opinions of the "Taliban government." Al-Hamid later notes, the people see the Taliban as righteous and devoted to God while he and his colleagues see them as unbelievers and apostates.

The disagreement appears to have been exacerbated by a letter, written by al-Hamid, on the topic of whether or not apostates and unbelievers may participate in fighting. Though the letter was intended to bring the Taliban back in line with orthodoxy the unintended result was increased "insolence and alienation" among the local population and the launch of a smear campaign by the Taliban in a book, written by Sheik Abu Qutada, bearing the title: "Alliance in Exposing the Fighters Who Do Not Adhere to the Principles of Religion."

Al-Hamid, in the letter, comments that he responded with a reasoned rebuttal in his own book, "Verification and Evidence in Refuting the Author of Alliances of the Righteous." However, at the time of writing to al-Qayim the relationship with the people and the Taliban remains strained as evidenced by al-Hamid and his followers being branded "passing apostate-dogs and sinners."

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-601693

Date: Unknown

Author: Abu Mus'ab

Length: 2 pages

Title: Status of Jihad

Synopsis: A letter from Abu Mus'ab to Abu Mohammed relating a meeting with Abu Musab Zarqawi. The author and Zarqawi agree that the Muslims fighting in Bosnia, Tajikistan, Chechnya, and Kashmir are polytheists and supporters of secular democracy, and that the Taliban are a front for Pakistan.

Key Themes: Zarqawi tells Abu Mus'ab that he is branded as takfir because of his views about the Muslims in Bosnia, Tajikistan, Chechnya, and Kashmir.

The Muslims in those areas interests are in secular democracy, and they are all too willing to seek accommodation with secular power.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-602181

Date: Unknown

Author: Unknown

Length: 2 pages

Title: Political Speculation

Synopsis: This document is a response to issues raised in a previous correspondence. It appears to be addressed to Al-Sahal Al-Mumtan', but this could be the author's name. The author is analyzing the impact of the destruction of the Buddha statues, the fall of the Taliban regime, and speculates on future U.S. steps in the Middle East.

Key Themes: The author concurs with his correspondent in stating a low opinion of the Taliban. The Taliban has a "mentality based on fabrications, wrongdoing, beating around the bush and running away from reality." The destruction of the Buddha statues is judged insignificant in comparison to the desire of some Taliban to gain respectability by taking a seat in the United Nations.

The author disagrees concerning Iranian leadership of the Islamic movement. He asks: "How can it fulfill the leadership role when it is incapable of guiding the Islamic insurgency?" He encourages Iran to attack Israel, and speculates that the U.S. is planning to attack Iran to protect Israel.

The final paragraph expresses a change in tone with admiration expressed for the Taliban for destroying the Buddha statues and protecting Osama bin Laden.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-800581

Author: Abu 'Ata Al-Sharqi

Title: Abu Ata Al-Sharqi Reports from Afghanistan

Date: September 4, 1994

Length: 3 pages

Synopsis

Abu 'Ata Al-Sharqi reports in a letter the situation before he and other al-Qaeda operatives leave Afghanistan. He expresses satisfaction that Faye兹 Muhammad is experiencing problems after causing al-Qaeda hardship in some way, and asks to be allowed to finish the Furqan project by training a group of Uzbeks before he leaves Afghanistan for Sudan.

Key Themes

Al-Sharqi acknowledges the order to evacuate Afghanistan, and thinks the order is for the best. He is sorry to leave, regarding Afghanistan as a paradise, with ample opportunities to see the fruits of their labors (comparable to Sudan), but also as a place with difficult conditions.

Three recent incidents have made Al-Sharqi happy:

1. The Vice President of Al-Jama't Al-Islamiyah visited Al-Badr Camp, and agreed with Al-Sharqi and his associates that "such incidents" should not happen, nor is this the way they should communicate. He would go to Al-Ghond himself to resolve the situation.
2. Al-Sharqi and his associates visited Kabul and Hikmetyar's headquarters to deny that al-Qaeda had given any weapons to Massoud (it had actually gone to Al-Nahda party), and to discuss their problem with Al-Ghond. Hikmetyar's people agreed that Faye兹 Muhammad (apparently the person behind the "incident") was corrupt, and might have to be killed.
3. Faye兹 Muhammad was protecting fellow Manakel tribe members built houses in violation of the government of Khost's regulations, but backed down in the face of the government's threats to attack Matoon citadel and kick the party out of Khost.

Al-Sharqi expresses his satisfaction that Faye兹 Muhammad is experiencing such misfortune in light of what he did to them.

The Al-Qaeda operatives' mission was to help with the Furqan project. Previously, they had trained a class of Tajiks at al-Farouq camp, and had the opportunity to train Uzbeks as well. Abu Walid, an associate of Al-Sharqi, is strongly in favor of training the Uzbeks since the opportunity may not arise again. Eventually, they agree to do it as long as the Uzbeks arrive within two months, pending a decision from the al-Qaeda leadership, which Al-Sharqi asks for. He asks the recipient of the leader to prepare a stand or cart for him (for business) in Khartoum in anticipation of his arrival there.

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-801138

Length: 332 pages

Date: various dates in 2000

Title: Personal Notebook

Author: Unknown

Synopsis

The document appears to be Usama Bin Laden's personal notebook or that of an individual in close contact with Bin Laden. The contents cover a broad range of topics such as meeting notes, to-do lists, lecture notes, letter drafts, shopping lists and questions addressed to training camp lecturers.

Key Themes

While the notebook contains assorted notes on various topics, the bulk of the document records approximately 270 different questions posed by mujahidin training camp participants to their instructors, covering a wide variety of topics ranging from the jihads in Chechnya and Uzbekistan, geographical questions and requests for clarification on theological points. Of special interest is the table on page 194 classifying 16 different question topics addressed to Abu al-Waleed, Abu Hafs and Abu Abdullah following a course given by Abu Hafs. Each category is rated by the number of questions each topic received. The most popular questions from this table address political terminology, the United States, the New World Order, the Taliban and Arab Freedom Fighters and Yemen.

Aside from the questions, the notebook contains a seemingly random assortment of notes on a wide range of topics. For example, page 25 contains a shopping list of classroom supplies and kitchen utensils including mango juice, envelopes, pens and napkins. Page 45 contains the minutes of a meeting held in September 2007 including Usama Bin Laden's speaking points and a list of people attending the meeting.

At other points in the book the author records the following: observing a reconnaissance plane at an estimated altitude of 7 kilometers above the compound; a calculation of each Muslim's share of oil based on the amount of oil produced by the Islamic world. The daily share of a family of 8 people is \$30 while the daily individual share is \$3.75; and a set of instructions for using an audio/video computer program for teaching classes.

Doc ID: --

Author: "Atiyah"

Title: Aityah's Letter to Zarqawi

Date: September 26, 2006

Length: 7 pages

Synopsis

The identity of the letter's author, "Atiyah," is unknown, but based on the contents of the letter he seems to be a highly placed al-Qa`ida leader who fought in Algeria in the early 1990s. `Atiyah's letter echoes many of the themes found in the October 2005 letter written to Zarqawi by al-Qa`ida's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri; indeed, it goes so far as to explicitly confirm the authenticity of that earlier letter. `Atiyah's admonitions in this letter, like those of Zawahiri in his letter to Zarqawi, also dovetail with other publicly available texts by al-Qa`ida strategists.

Key Themes

Although `Atiyah praises Zarqawi's military success against coalition forces in Iraq, he is most concerned with Zarqawi's failure to understand al-Qa`ida's broader strategic objective: attracting mass support among the wider Sunni Muslim community. `Atiyah reminds Zarqawi that military actions must be subservient to al-Qa`ida's long-term political goals. Zarqawi's use of violence against popular Sunni leaders, according to `Atiyah, is undermining al-Qa`ida's ability to win the "hearts of the people."

According to `Atiyah, Zarqawi's widening scope of operations, culminating with the November 2005 hotel bombings in Amman, Jordan, has alienated fellow Sunnis and reduced support for the global al-Qa`ida movement. In this vein, `Atiyah instructs Zarqawi to avoid killing popular Iraqi Sunni leaders because such actions alienate the very populations that al-Qa`ida seeks to attract to its cause. `Atiyah also encourages Zarqawi to forge strategic relationships with moderate Sunnis, particularly tribal and religious leaders, even if these leaders do not accept Zarqawi's religious positions.

`Atiyah instructs Zarqawi to follow orders from Usama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri on major strategic issues, such as initiating a war against Shiites; undertaking large-scale operations; or operating outside of Iraq. `Atiyah goes on to criticize Zarqawi's board of advisors in Iraq for their lack of adequate political and religious expertise, and he warns Zarqawi against the sin of arrogance. Because al-Qa`ida is in what `Atiyah calls a "stage of weakness," `Atiyah urges Zarqawi to seek counsel from wiser men in Iraq— implying that there might be someone more qualified than Zarqawi to command al-Qa`ida operations in Iraq.

`Atiyah closes with a request that Zarqawi send a messenger to "Waziristan" (likely, Waziristan, Pakistan) in order to establish a reliable line of communication with Bin Laden and Zawahiri. `Atiyah confirms in the letter that al-Qa`ida's overall communications network has been severely disrupted and complains specifically that sending communications to Zarqawi from outside of Iraq remains difficult. Interestingly, he explains how Zarqawi might use *jihadi* discussion forums to communicate with al-Qa`ida leadership in Waziristan.

`Atiyah's unequivocal confirmation of the Zawahiri letter's legitimacy, his authoritative tone, and his insider knowledge, indicate that he is among the highest ranking leaders in al-Qa`ida. But unlike most of al-Qa`ida's known senior leadership, who remain isolated in the tribal areas of Pakistan or under house arrest in Iran, `Atiyah appears to have remarkable freedom of movement and a functional communication network.

Doc ID: --

Length: 13 pages

Date: July 9, 2005 (Jumada al-Thani, 1426)

Title: Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi

Author: Ayman al-Zawahiri

Synopsis

A letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri, written in Afghanistan, to Abu Musam al-Zarqawi, head of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, in which the author presents his strategy of winning the jihad in Iraq. Zawahiri emphasizes that achieving al-Qa'ida's main goal in Iraq, establishing a caliphate and extending the jihad to the greater Middle East, is as much a political as a military struggle in which all actions, military or otherwise, have political significance. Therefore, more attention should be given to the political efforts of building unity with the Muslim people (umma), the Muslim scholars (ulema) and the mujahidin. Further, any actions, which cause disarray among these groups, should be avoided.

Key Themes

The letter addresses the political situation in Iraq and advocates measures, which will foster unity among al-Qa'ida's supporters or attract new followers. Zawahiri presents his argument by first listing al-Qa'ida's 4-point goal in Iraq:

1. Expel the Americans from Iraq.
2. Establish an Islamic authority and develop it into a caliphate, extending influence over as much Iraqi territory as possible.
3. Extend the jihad to Iraq's secular neighbors.
4. Extend the jihad to Israel.

He explains that the long-term goals (points 3 and 4) are impossible to attain without first achieving the short-term goals (points 1 and 2). Zawahiri then explains his conviction that in order to achieve the long-term goals al-Qa'ida must immediately begin to address the political side of the conflict so as not to lose the short-term goals. Only by using their most powerful weapon, namely, the popular support of the umma in Iraq and neighboring countries will al-Qa'ida be ready for the inevitable withdrawal of American forces.

According to Zawahiri, the only way to garner popular support is to make every effort to avoid actions, which the umma does not understand or approve. In order to avoid such actions Zawahiri offers five main strategies:

1. Consult as many factions as possible in governance and decision making.
2. Create unity among the mujahidin.
3. Strive for unity with the ulema.
4. Do not attack the Shi'a.
5. Minimize excessive violence.

Strategy 1

Zawahiri advises Zarqawi to strive for unity with the people of Iraq because he believes the American forces may leave Iraq sooner than anticipated. In order not to be marginalized by other political elements Zarqawi is advised to begin laying the groundwork so that he may be ready. In order to accomplish this goal Zawahiri suggests including tribal and political leaders in al-Qa'ida decision making as much as possible. The letter invokes the example of the Taliban regime in

Afghanistan as a negative example in order to illustrate this point by noting restrictions to participation in the government to students and the people of Kandahar. In the end, according to Zawahiri, when the Americans invaded, the Afghan people did not have a strong affiliation to the Taliban and did not defend the regime. Therefore, if they are to enjoy a broad base of support in Iraq al-Qa'ida must strive to include as many political groups as possible in a coalition.

Strategy 2

Zarqawi is instructed to foster unity among the mujahidin. Zawahiri argues that any division among the mujahidin will lead to divisions among the umma. Therefore, every effort should be made to avoid conflict.

Strategy 3

The umma's perception of Al-Qa'ida's relationship to the ulema is also important. Zawahiri calls Zarqawi to avoid highlighting doctrinal differences or making disparaging remarks about specific scholars, which the general public does not understand. As the ulema are a symbol of Islam, people may come to believe that religion and its adherents are unimportant if public denunciations and doctrinal differences are highlighted. In Zawahiri's opinion, the loss of faith is a greater detriment to al-Qa'ida's cause than any benefit gained from criticizing a particular theologian.

The example of Mullah Muhammad Omar, Taliban leader in Afghanistan, is invoked to illustrate his point. He notes that Omar himself is a Hanafi adherent of the Matridi doctrine. Yet he did not draw attention to theological distinctions in the time of jihad. Zawahiri also argues that differences between religious doctrines will require generations to correct once the caliphate has been established. Therefore, the mujahidin should not concern themselves with solving these differences but concentrate on accomplishing the fundamental goals for Iraq.

Strategy 4

Al-Qa'ida's treatment of the Shi'a is another key element in fostering unity among the umma. According to the letter, Zarqawi is justified in attacking the Shi'a given the inevitability of a Sunni-Shi'a clash, the Shi'a's cooperation with America during the invasion of Afghanistan and the error of Shi'a beliefs. However, Zawahiri notes that the majority of Muslims do not understand these differences. Thus, the unity with the umma will be preserved by not attacking the Shi'a or highlighting doctrinal differences. Additionally, Zawahiri thinks that the threat of Iranian intervention on behalf of Iraqi Shi'a is a compelling reason to exercise restraint.

Strategy 5

Avoidance of unnecessary bloodshed is important for encouraging unity. Zarqawi is reminded that he is engaged in a struggle, which is being displayed in the news media and that the umma often does not comprehend the reasons for excessive violence seen in the media, though the actions are justified. Therefore, Zarqawi must refrain from excessive violence.